

Hans Kehrl - Realities in the Third Reich

From the "Rules for Political-Psychological Subversion", established by the Chinese Sun Tsu about 500 B.C.:The highest art is to break the enemy's resistance without fighting on the battlefield. Only on the battlefield is the direct method of war necessary; but only the indirect can bring about and consolidate a real victory.

- *"The supreme art is to break the enemy's resistance without fighting on the battlefield. Only on the battlefield is the direct method of war necessary, but only the indirect can bring about and consolidate a real victory.*
- *Destroy everything that is good in the enemy's country!*
- *Involve the representatives of the ruling classes in criminal undertakings; undermine their position and prestige in other ways, too; expose them to public disgrace before their fellow citizens!*
- *Use the work of the lowest and most desppicable people!*
- *Disrupt the activity of governments by all means!*
- *Spread discord and strife among the citizens of the enemy country!*
- *Challenge the young against the old!*
- *Destroy by all means the equipment, supplies and order of the enemy forces!*
- *Hijack ancient lore and its gods!*
- *Be cocky with offers and gifts to buy news and accomplices!*
- *Place secret scouts everywhere!*
- *Don't save money or promises at all, because it earns high interest!"*

This is how peace began

Prime Minister of France, George Clemenceau, on May 7, 1919, before the delegates of all Allied and Associated States at the Palace Hotel "Trianon" at Versailles:

"Gentlemen delegates of the German Empire! It is neither the time nor the place for superfluous words. You see before you the authorized representatives of the small and great powers who have united to bring to an end the terrible war which has been forced upon them. The hour of heavy reckoning has come. You have asked us for peace. We are inclined to grant it to you. We hereby present you with the book containing our terms of peace ..."

The German Reich Foreign Minister Count Brockdorff-Rantzau on it:

"We do not deceive ourselves about the extent of our defeat, the degree of our impotence. We know that the violence of German arms is broken; we know the force of hatred which confronts us here, and we have heard the passionate demand that the victors should at once make us pay as the conquered and punish us as the guilty.

It is demanded of us that we confess to be the only guilty ones; such a confession would be a lie in my mouth. Public opinion in all the countries of our enemies echoes with the crimes that Germany committed during the war. Here, too, we are prepared to admit that we have done wrong. But even in the way of warfare Germany alone has not been at fault. Every European nation knows deeds and persons of which the best of the

people do not like to remember. The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who perished from the blockade since November 11 (1918) were killed with cold deliberation after victory had been won and vouchsafed for our enemies. Think of this when you speak of guilt and atonement."

The War Guilt Article § 231 of the Versailles Peace stated:

"The Allied and Associated Governments declare, and Germany acknowledges, that Germany and her Allies are responsible as authors for all loss and damage suffered by the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals as a result of the war forced upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies."

Among the most important terms of the treaty were the land cessions imposed on Germany, the reparation demands, and the associated economic interventions in the defeated Germany. Ceded were:

Northern	Schleswig	to	Denmark	(with	vote)	-Eupen
and	Malmedy	to	Belgium			-Elsaß-Lothringen
to						France
-Saargebiet	for 15 years	economically delivered	to	France		
-Posen and West Prussia, parts of East Prussia and Hinterpommern			to Poland	Gdansk		
- problematic free state under League of Nations mandate with Polish rights			Melgebiet			
, part of Upper Silesia		to	Poland			
-Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia-	3.5 million Germans	Annexation	ban for			
reduced	AustriaSouth		Tyrol			
Italy						
-All colonies-						

The reparation sum was defined for the first time in January 1921:

226 billion gold marks in 42 annual installments, increasing annually from 2 to 6 billion. The Reparations Commission reduced to 223.5 billion, and finally 132 billion were demanded ultimatively under threat of occupation of the Ruhr.

The Ruhr region was eventually occupied. In the meantime, Germany slid into tremendous inflation:

In January 1922, one dollar paid 200 marks, in July = 500, in January 1923 = 18,000 marks, in July 1923 = 350,000, in August 1923 = four and a half million, in September almost 100 million, in October 25 billion, on November 15, 1923 (end of inflation) = 4.2 trillion. And "clever foreign businessmen" used this time to buy heavily in Germany. - What problems have just these facts enriched! The disarmament conditions etc. connected with the Versailler Frieden seemed harmless in comparison.

Germany's chronic powerlessness in the face of these developments on the one hand, and the arrogance on the other, which was fanned even more strongly by them, and which, especially among the Poles and Czechs, erupted in a fatal struggle for national identity, created conditions - quite apart from the Communist revolution in Russia and other countries - which could not be peacefully regulated if "the foundations of the Versailles order" were maintained.

Economic Miracle in the Third Reich

It has become common in recent years to speak of the period after World War I as the "golden twenties" in newspapers, magazines, on the radio and on television. This must give a false impression to those who did not live through that time. The twenties of this century were terrible years, from beginning to end for most of the German people. The term arose from the revival of art, literature and music, which seemed to have died out during the war and in the immediate post-war period. The revival of intellectual life took place mainly in the capital Berlin or in cities like Munich, Hamburg and Frankfurt. To generally refer to the twenties in Germany as the "golden" years is a grotesque falsification of history.

The first four years were determined by the decline of the imperial currency in an inflation without precedent. In January 1923, the dollar was still quoted at 18,000 marks, but banknotes over one million marks had already become legal tender. By October 25, 1923, the exchange rate of the mark had risen anew to 40 billion marks to one dollar. On November 15, 1923, the spook ended.

In terms of financial policy and economics, the Stresemann government succeeded in implementing a new, stabilized currency during its short existence with the help of Schacht as Reich Currency Commissioner and Luther as Reich Finance Minister. After ten years of world war, civil war and decay, a new beginning had been set. But those who did not have tangible assets were impoverished and destitute. All monetary capital was wiped out, because for one trillion - 1,000 billion paper marks there was only one Rentenmarke. The capital of most companies, which were well financed before the inflation, was also radically melted down by the devaluation of money. For years, current assets dwindled away, because too much time had to be spent buying with valuable foreign currency and selling at paper marks. The enormous flow of money from rapidly increasing foreign debt initially obscured reality. There then seemed to be a brief interim high, but the democratic-parliamentary system of the Weimar Republic did not succeed in getting a government on its feet that could get a grip on the social, financial and economic situation.

Since the Reichstag could not produce viable, i.e. efficient, governments, Reich President Hindenburg appointed the first Presidential Cabinet on March 29, 1930. Brüning tried to replace inflation with deflation, but that ultimately meant casting out the devil by Beelzebub. By 1932, almost one-third of the working population was unemployed, and workers' incomes had fallen from RM 23.9 billion in 1929 to RM 11 billion in 1932.

According to tax statistics, of some 31 million so-called income earners, 69.2 percent earned less than 1,200 marks a year, 21.7 percent earned between 1,200 and 3,000 marks a year, and only 7.1 percent earned more. For every ten people in employment, there were 4.3 unemployed.

When, on January 30, 1933, Reich President Hindenburg charged Mr. Hitler with forming a new Reich government, an unimaginable low point in the economic and social situation had been reached. Out of a total of 18 million "existing" workers and employees, only about 12 million were employed. Of the approximately 6 million unemployed, more than one-third were disenrolled from unemployment insurance and crisis welfare; as "welfare unemployed," they received an average of only RM 55 per month in assistance.

The compensation of the better-off unemployed was about RM 15 to 20 per month higher. Nevertheless, a total of RM 4 billion had to be spent on the unemployed in 1932. This was 16 percent of the total of all wages and salaries, 9 percent of the total national income and 57 percent of the total annual income of the Reich and the Länder. The "income per capita of the population" had declined from RM 1,187 in 1929 to RM 627 in 1932.

To appreciate the extent of the impoverishment, one must know that in the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, the same statistical figure in 1968 was DM 8,759. In February 1933, there was a foreign debt of about RM 19 billion. To give an idea of what 19 billion RM meant at that time: The foreign debt in relation to annual exports corresponded to about 3.3 years of goods exports. Compared with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1969, 3.3 years of exports would mean DM 374 billion! Terms such as "cyclical low" or "unemployment" only inadequately characterize the

situation described. After the spectacular bloodletting caused by inflation, the collapses in the banking sector and the ever worsening unemployment, most of industry was at the end of its financial rope.

Agriculture was impoverished by falling prices and declining sales and was kept alive with difficulty only by moratoriums and seizure stops. More than two-thirds of the people were vegetating without hope far below a normal subsistence level. The governments of the last five years had demonstrated their incompetence in economic and social policy through a lack of ideas and antiquated economic concepts that had led to national bankruptcy. The inevitable result was the impoverishment and despair of the people and their bitterness against a system of government that was unable to change this.

In this situation, there could be only one economic policy for the National Socialist government: The fight against unemployment and the creation of jobs at any price. Before 1932, in a major speech devoted to economic policy, the leader of the NSDAP Reichstag parliamentary group, Gregor Strasser, had firmly opposed the government's deflationary policy and inaction, claiming that it could not find a way out of the economic and social catastrophe on its own because of a lack of capital and dependence on the world economy. Strasser said at the time, among other things:

"The poorer a nation is, the more it must work, because: not capital creates labor, but labor creates capital!"

On February 1, 1933, Adolf Hitler announced in the Reichstag:

"The national government will solve the great work of reorganizing the economy of our people with two great four-year plans: Rescue of the German peasants for the preservation of food - and thus the basis of the nation's life. Rescue of the German worker by a tremendous and comprehensive attack against unemployment."

Hitler called for a "labor battle". Not only the government and the party, but every citizen of the state was to contribute to job creation with ideas and suggestions. The government wanted to provide an initial impetus through large-scale public works, but the business community was also called upon to take initiatives to eliminate unemployment. This action ran under the motto: "First to each a job, then to each his job!"

Hitler was convinced that the terrible situation could be overcome only if a tremendous wave of participation by the entire people could be achieved. He therefore deployed all the forces of the party organizations, as well as the propaganda apparatus of Josef Goebbels, concentrated on one goal: "*We must and we will create work for everyone again.*" The economic miracle became a reality because it succeeded in awakening an activist optimism throughout the country and creating a climate of general solidarity.

In the spring of 1937, i.e. after four years since the beginning of the "labor battle," the 33 percent of the unemployed had fallen to only 6.5 percent, and in the spring of 1938 (before the annexation of Austria) there were only 507,000 statistically counted unemployed - 2.7 percent. Taking fluctuation into account, full employment had almost been reached and became a reality at the beginning of 1939. Moreover, the number of workers available for work had increased in the five years from 18 million to 20.5 million. Of this increase, 700,000 were women alone, who were able to turn to professional work anew.

In these five years, the number of dwellings built had doubled compared to 1932, and investments by the transport industry had risen to RM 3.8 billion by 1938, 4.5 times as much as in 1932. Of these investments, 45 percent in 1938 alone went to road construction (of which RM 178 million

had already been spent on the Reichsautobahnen in 1934). For 1938, the figures were 15 million or 50 percent. The greatest increase was in industrial investments. After RM 2.6 billion in 1928, they had fallen to a low of only 439 million in 1932. An amount of 2.6 billion was exceeded again as early as 1937, and by 1939 industrial investment had reached a level ten times that of 1932. The number of passenger cars and trucks had tripled since 1933. Employment in industry (Old Kingdom), according to index figures (1928 = 100), increased 112 percent in the seven years from 1932 to 1938, or about 13 percent a year. Total sales in the economy increased (estimated after sales tax payments) by 2.6 times from 1932-1938. German national income (Altreich) - roughly comparable to today's social product - in 1939 was pretty much double what it was in 1932, RM 90 billion. The annual income of workers had also more than doubled since 1932. At the same time, prices remained almost stable: the Reich index figures for food, housing, heating, clothing, lighting and various consumer goods rose by a total of only 5.6 points in the same years, i.e. by an annual average of around 0.8 percent. Gross earnings per week increased by 30 percent in absolute terms and by 22.6 percent in real purchasing power from 1932 to 1939, or by more than 3 percent a year.

These series of figures read like a picture book illustration on the subject of "growth and stability. Contrary to widespread belief, spending on armaments played only a minor role in this economic development in 1933/35, a normal role in 1936/37 and a major role only in 1938/39. Even then, however, they still lagged far behind investments in non-armament-related areas as an engine of economic growth. Between 1933 and 1939, around RM 100 billion was invested in industry, agriculture, transport, housing, energy and public administration.

Expenditures for the Wehrmacht and armaments, on the other hand, amounted to:
 1933/34 = RM 1.9 billion = 4% of the national income.
 1934/35 = RM 1.9 billion = 4% of the national income.
 1935/36 = RM 4 billion = 7% of national income.
 1936/37 = RM 5.8 billion = 9% of the national income.
 1937/38 = RM 8.2 billion = 11% of the national income.
 1938/39 = RM 18.4 billion = 22% of the national income.

According to the calculations of the Institute for Business Cycle Research, the share of national income spent on armaments in 1934 was 3.0% in Great Britain, 8.1% in France (1932), 8.4% in Japan, and 9.0% in Soviet Russia. A 'normal' level of spending on the Wehrmacht and armaments was not exceeded until unemployment was almost eliminated. How was such a 'tailor-made upswing' possible at all in terms of fiscal policy? It was not until 1936 that the English national economist Keynes began to publish his pioneering thoughts on an active economic policy. The financing of the economic upswing in the "Third Reich" was based on similar lines of thought (Gregor Strasser: "*Labor Creates Capital*"), although not based on such precise scientific considerations. The upswing was made possible by "productive money creation". As had already been the case under Brüning and Papen, the Reichsbank financed job creation measures on a bill basis, albeit in a "mini-format" at the time, through the intermediary of various sponsoring companies, with multiple prolongations. Total expenditures for these job creation measures in 1933/36 amounted to about RM 5 billion, of which about RM 4 billion was covered by 1939 by bill payments through the regular budget.

The significant economic investments for Austria, the Sudetenland and the "Protectorate" were financed quite predominantly through normal economic credit channels with "Reichsbürgschaften". For armaments, a maximum of RM 20-25 billion was spent by 1939 through special financing (Mefowchsel, Lieferschatzanweisungen, tax vouchers, Reich guarantees and similar financing means). The capital expenditures of the plants producing the armaments were financed by agreed depreciation above cost and are therefore included in the cost of armaments. Expenditures for the current needs of the Wehrmacht under construction (personnel costs, construction costs and inventory) could be met quite predominantly from the ordinary budget, since the revenue from taxes and customs duties had increased from RM 6.8 billion in 1932 to RM 23.5 billion in 1939 as a result of the economic revival, thus more than tripling! The increase in taxes and customs duties

above the 1933 level alone provided more than RM 40 billion for the budget in these seven years (of course, not only for the Wehrmacht budget).

The printing press was not used for financing. From December 31, 1932, to February 28, 1939 (the last figure before the outbreak of war), the amount of money in circulation rose from 5.6 billion only to 10.9 billion, i.e., the quantity in circulation increased by about 100 percent with an increase in the volume of economic activity of more than 100 percent and an enlargement of the monetary area measured by head count (Austria, Sudetenland) of more than 15 percent. German foreign debt declined from 19 billion in February 1938. A "capital consumption" of RM 2,894 million in 1932 contrasted with a monetary capital formation of RM 7,000 million in 1938.

The economic crisis and economic misery had been eliminated by 1938. Likewise, however, the second Four-Year Plan had come to a successful conclusion: The rescue of the German farmer to preserve the nation's food and livelihood base had succeeded in five years. From 1932/33 to 1938/39, the price level of products from German agriculture for sale was increased by an overall average of 35 percent. But the Reich index figures for the cost of living for feeding the population rose by only 6.5 percent. In fact, the trade profits were sharply reduced. The important shift away from grain to potatoes, slaughter cattle and milk was achieved through the price policy. Farm levies rose by 33 percent from 1932/33 to 1938/39, and sales revenues by 72 percent in the same period. The operating surplus statistically calculated for agriculture as a whole (Altreich) rose in a continuous line from RM766 million in 1932/33 to RM3,480 million in 1938/39, i.e., more than fourfold.

For the majority of the German people, the development briefly described here meant a way out of hardship, despair and hopelessness to a seemingly secure existence worth living and provided the vast majority of the people with a fund of confidence that remained intact well into the war years.

Adolf Hitler had saved the German people from a hopeless situation. In addition, for the individual, whatever had become known, whispered, or obvious about misdevelopments of a personal or other kind in party and state, about abuses, exaggerations by propaganda, and incitement against those who thought differently, faded away. It was not attributed to him, Hitler; he would also know how to rectify this one day, they consoled themselves. The economic miracle that he himself had experienced continued to have a dominating effect for a long time.

Hitler's foreign policy goals

This topic, which has been suggested to me by historians, embarrasses me somewhat, because it presupposes that Hitler's foreign policy goals were definitive and unalterable from the beginning or - according to general consensus - are definite now. According to my overview, I am not able to see it that way. Hitler, according to his whole way of thinking and working, never started from a fixed plan for important problems, but set developments in motion by his own activities or impulses, followed their progress, often came to final decisions very hesitantly, and then, when he thought the development was ripe, either pushed them forward dynamically, gave them a different turn, or called them off altogether when he had come to other conclusions. This certainly also applied to some of the foreign policy goals, which can probably neither be regarded as completely fixed nor even as widely known, as many historians believe. In my opinion, this applies especially to the leitmotif in his book *Mein Kampf*: "*the gain of Lebensraum*".

From 1934 to 1938, I was the closest and most trusted associate of Wilhelm Keppler, who was then the "Fuehrer's economic representative. He had been in close contact with Hitler for many years before 1933, had established contact with v. Papen through Baron v. Sehröder, and had also introduced Hitler to v. Ribbentrop, with whom he later became State Secretary in the Foreign Office. During the years of close cooperation with Keppler and on joint trips, I never tired of asking Keppler about everything he knew or thought he knew about Hitler's plans for the future (Keppler was not a man of strict discretion). At no time in all the years had there been any talk between him

and Hitler or him and v. Ribbentrop, with whom Keppler was on a first-name basis, of "Lebensraum im Osten" (living space in the East) or even an "Ostimperium" (Eastern Empire) as a political goal, but there had been talk of a revision of the border demarcation of the Treaty of Versailles, which had assigned the Prussian provinces of Posen, West Prussia and parts of Upper Silesia to the newly formed Polish state. Hitler knew very well by 1939 at the latest that we neither needed nor could have settled further "settlement space" in the East, of which he had dreamed in the twenties. In a report dictated by v. Neurath, the then "Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia", to the Foreign Office about a meeting with Hitler in December 1939, it says:

"It is refrained from settling the country (Protectorate) on a larger scale with Germans, because the Germanization of the New German East (West Prussia, Posen, Upper Silesia) is urgent and already for this the number of German settlers is hardly sufficient. "

In retrospect, it is often believed that all of Hitler's foreign policy goals could have been read from his book *Mein Kampf*, written in 1924/25.

Well, I read "Mein Kampf" as a politically highly interested citizen once on a business trip to the USA in 1929 on the ship; not since then. After all, it was not a Bible to be believed. The World War I corporal had written the I. part of the book at the age of 35 in prison, five years after the collapse of the Reich; at the time, therefore, when inflation had destroyed large parts of the German national wealth. It was not a time when one was inclined to dream utopias. At that time, Austria and Czechoslovakia - artificially newly constructed state entities - were barely five years old: Austria was a "state against its will," for its population had wanted annexation to the Reich, and Czechoslovakia (to a significant extent the old imperial lands of Bohemia and Moravia) consisted of five nations, of which the ruling Czechs represented not quite half the population. At that time there was no reason to assume that these entities had to be historically final solutions.

(If Hitler's book called for a revision of the territorial provisions of the Versailles Treaty (without Alsace-Lorraine, which Hitler wanted to see excluded), one did not yet need to derive Hitler's "war aims" from it. The world did not then, and neither did we. After all, the results by the end of 1938 showed that revisions were indeed possible without bloodshed: Austria, Sudetenland, and even Bohemia and Moravia in 1939).

Three things, however, everyone could know about Hitler's foreign policy goals:

He would, in due course, pursue a revision of the territorial provisions of the Treaties of Versailles, St. Germain, and Trianon. He would demand equal rights for the Reich also with regard to the strength and armament of the Reich's armed forces. In addition, he had in mind at that time - rather vaguely - the expansion of the "German Lebensraum" - whatever that might mean.

After the annexation of Austria, the Sudetenland, the formation of the Protectorate and the reintegration of the old Prussian provinces of Posen, West Prussia and Upper Silesia, this problem seemed to most people to be closed and off the table.

But we were in a state of war with France and England as guarantor powers of the defeated Poland, and this war had certainly not been one of Hitler's foreign policy goals! We were also certainly not prepared for this war with two great powers at the same time, and Hitler had at least not expected or wanted it at this time. Neither the economic administration nor big industry had had the opportunity to form their own opinion in advance on Hitler's foreign policy activities described so far. No one had informed them or asked for their opinion.

My boss at the time, Reich Economics Minister Funk, learned next to nothing about the invasion of Austria, about the development of the conflict over the Sudetenland, and about the planning of

the protectorate. Funk, too, had neither been asked for his opinion nor instructed to make preparations. He had to rely on the newspapers and public announcements like the rest of us.

It must be said clearly: We had formally, but not actually, a Reich Cabinet that took decisions. Of the Reich ministers, apart from v. Ribbentrop, only Göring, as Hitler's quasi-deputy, and not always, was consulted in early planning stages or initiated into actions. Therefore, not concrete information but rumors determined the "foreign policy" scene, which could be derived, for example, in the economic administration and industry from the state of knowledge about rearmament. The subject of rearmament will therefore be dealt with separately in a later section of this paper.

First, however, it seems necessary to say something in general about the relationship of business, and especially of industry and big business, to the party and the government in the Third Reich, since in some cases adventurous ideas seem to exist here even among historians.

Party and Economy in the Third Reich

We cannot and must not speak here of the economy as a kind of monolithic entity with a common mindset, common interests and common political convictions and goals. There was no such thing in the Kaiserreich, the Weimar Republic or the Third Reich, and there is no such thing today either. When I sketch a corresponding brief outline in the following, I would like to legitimize myself for such an undertaking in all urgency:

Even before 1933 I was involved in a number of business associations; from 1933 to 1942 I was president of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Lower Lusatia and vice president of the Berlin- Brandenburg Chamber of Commerce.

Somewhat later, I also belonged to the presidium of the Reich Chamber of Commerce. I knew very many presidents and managing directors of the chambers in the Reich for a decade, both in the course of their duties and, in some cases, personally. From 1933 to 1942, I was a district economic advisor and a member of the Commission for Economic Policy in the NSDAP and knew about two thirds of the district leaders and all district economic advisors in the Reich from internal party contacts, conferences, comradeship evenings and other occasions.

Since I have worked exclusively in and for the state in a variety of positions, most recently in leading positions, I have become acquainted with the most important personalities within and outside the economic organizations, both in the course of my work and, in some cases, personally. I was therefore a "co-worker" and a "witness" at the same time, and I know what I am talking about when I make the following statements:

a) Farmers and rural people were among Hitler's first and most ardent supporters and the majority of them voted for the NSDAP early on. Even before the seizure of power, many top positions in agricultural organizations were filled by National Socialists. At the same time, from 1933 onward, the remaining large-scale German nationalist farmers, who had had political influence over and through Hindenburg in his day, were almost completely ousted from the organizations. The National Socialists played the decisive role in the Reichsnährstand, which set the tone for agricultural activities next to the Reich Ministry of Food and to which all farmers belonged as members by law. With the exception of most large-scale farmers, the Reichsnährstand and its leadership identified with the party and the state and were skeptical of what they saw as the "capitalist" commercial economy. Among other things, they felt they were being urged to maintain almost perfect price stability for their products, although price stability for their inputs was not initially granted by the commercial economy. The Reichsnährstand was considered by the "party" to be 'ideologically consolidated' and professionally outstanding. The agricultural industry and its organization fulfilled their "duty to the people and the state," as they saw it, optimally to the bitter end.

b) The commercial middle classes, i.e., craftsmen, retailers and the clamping industry, but also a very high percentage of members of the liberal professions, belonged to Hitler's supporters at an early stage, as did the agricultural sector. As a subsidiary organization of the party, the "Kampfbund für den gewerblichen Mittelstand" played an important role in elections and propaganda before 1933. The "Law for the Protection of the Retail Trade" was one of the first laws passed by the new government in 1933.

c) The savings bank and cooperative banking system, with its regional roots, integrated quickly and without friction into the Nazi state. Private banks and, above all, large banks were by and large regarded as anti-Nazi, because the party felt itself to be "anti-capitalist," whatever that might be understood to mean. A member of the board of the Reich-owned major bank "Reichskreditgesellschaft" was presented as head of the Reich Group Banks, and boards of directors and supervisory boards of major banks were sometimes filled with supporters and sympathizers of National Socialism or those deemed to be so after Jewish members left, but relations between the party and the banks were generally at least cool.

The banking world did not have any significant economic or even political influence. They recovered only slowly from the banking crisis of 1931/32 (collapse of Darmstädter and Dresdner Bank). After two to three years of rapid full employment in the Third Reich, they gained strength and enterprise and were very active in spreading their {also industrial } sphere of interest to Austria, the Sudetenland and the Protectorate and the regained eastern provinces of the Reich. Desired activities also in the occupied western territories had to be curbed.

Dr. Hjalmer Schacht was certainly not presented or even favored by the banks as Reichsbank President and later as Reich Minister of Economics, but Schacht started out as a loner in the Harzburg Front and sought connections with Keppler's circle of friends and Hitler himself. As executive Reich Minister of Economics from 1934 to 1937, he was built up by big industry as a patron and in part - e.g. in the dispute with the steel industry over the establishment of the Reichswerke "Hermann Göring" - abused politically.

He soon behaved consciously, almost anti-party. His dislike was strongly reciprocated in the "party". However, the dispute with Göring in 1937 over the latter's authority to issue directives as commissioner for the Four-Year Plan vis-à-vis Schacht as Reich Minister of Economics was the real cause of his downfall as Reich Minister of Economics.

d) Even before the change of power in 1933, the ranks of entrepreneurs from small **and medium-sized industry included rather isolated convinced supporters of the NSDAP and a large number of sympathizers. The rapid success of the NS government's job creation policy, which resulted in full employment from about 1937 onward, the National Socialist social policy (Law on the Order of National Work and activities of the Labor Front) and the consolidation of the nominal wage level (fringe benefits increased considerably) eliminated initial skepticism and soon prompted numerous industrialists to cooperate in a spirit of trust and commitment and to be willing to engage in extensive voluntary work in business organizations. As a result, the chambers of industry and commerce and their top organizations were soon headed quite predominantly by active National Socialists, who also enjoyed the confidence of the local party organizations. Likewise, for the leadership and the advisory councils of the central business organizations, such as trade groups, economic groups, and Reich groups, an abundance of business personalities were found willing to cooperate intensively and to devote a great deal of energy. All this applies to the circles of small and medium-sized industry, i.e. above all the entrepreneurs of the consumer goods and durable goods industry and the production goods industry in the broadest sense. Even in the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, they were not accustomed to exerting any significant influence on economic policy through the political parties, let alone influencing "big politics. Even the weight of the German People's Party, for example, which was particularly close to industry in the Weimar Republic, was not sufficient for this.**

e) Even in the Weimar Republic, "**heavy or large-scale industry**" played a special political role outside and alongside general industry, which generally included the ironmaking industry, mining, large-scale chemicals, the large-scale electrical industry and parts of the heavy engineering industry, as well as large shipyards and the armaments sector, which, however, played only a rather modest role in quantitative terms in the Weimar Republic. It was not easy to clearly define the term "large-scale industry".

They were the "big ones" who were known more by their family names than by their company names: Krupp, Thyssen, Röchling, Stumm, Klöckner, Pönsken, Vögler, Siemens, Bosch, Helfferich, Schaffgotsch, Friedrich Flick, and of course IG-Farben AG and many others. Before 1933, they had established and cultivated direct relationships with government circles in the broadest sense, with diplomats, ministry officials, major banks and the Reich's armed forces, which gave them access to information and influence outside the associations that other industrialists did not have. This network of information and influence was underpinned by the fact that, with the help of considerable financial support from "pro-business" parties such as the German National People's Party and the German People's Party (DVP), men of influence were launched as members of parliament or some industrialists even had themselves nominated as members of parliament in the Reichstag, such as Hugenberg, Helfferich, Vögler and others.

In the 1920s, I myself observed in the DVP, of which I was a member at the time, how things were done behind the scenes: soberly, factually, rather harmlessly and naively than ingeniously or even diabolically. They also owned stakes in press organs or supported them financially. Hugenberg even created his own press empire for the German National People's Party and acquired UFA as a film medium. Among the relatively narrow circle of personalities who exercised real influence in politics and government during the Weimar period, big business represented an influential bloc, especially in economic, financial, tax, trade and armaments policy (not in foreign policy), even if it by no means had the power and influence that the Communists attributed to it as "monopoly capital" allegedly ruling behind the scenes, given the parliamentary strength of the Socialists, Communists and the Center. Nor did they - except perhaps Hugenberg - seek political power. They wanted to secure and promote the business interests of their large corporations at home and abroad and in government contracts, and to ward off all too great tax and social burdens. They may have been able to prevent and bend some things in parliament, but *they were not able to achieve anything really important.*

Friedrich Flick confessed before the Nuremberg court:

A company had to be able to live and work with any government. For this reason, he had always supported all parliamentary parties - and there were many of them - with money during the Weimar period, "with the exception of the Communist Party. But the political influence of "big industry" did not reach so far that even a single government was set up during the Weimar Republic that would have had the strength and ability to lead the financial and industrial problems of the German economy toward a solution after the currency collapse, to stop the impoverishment of the German people, which was in full swing, and to create a new basis of confidence.

In March 1930, Reich President v. Hindenburg instructed Heinrich Brüning to form a first "presidential cabinet." The Weimar parliamentary republic as such was thus at an end.

Dr. Brüning, who deserved respect in every respect, had the courage to govern that had been lost in the last years of parliamentary democracy. From the very beginning, however, he was surrounded by an aura of a certain unworldliness; it was probably also his ascetic attitude and his fixation on the Reich budget that prevented him from gaining an insight into the actual economic and social situation of the German people and led him down the completely illogical path of trying to cure a sick economy in rapid decline by massive deflation.

Fixated on the struggle for the elimination of reparations and turned to foreign policy, he did not sufficiently realize that he was governing a people and an economy that were falling into total hopelessness and destitution due to constantly rising unemployment.

The last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic, the reactionary v. Papen, who was clueless in economic matters, was in himself perhaps a man after the heart of big agrarians and big industry. They had influence on him, only he himself had influence on nobody and nothing and disappeared as quickly as he had come. Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich.

For big industry, a new era was heralded as early as 1930, when 107 National Socialists were elected to the Reichstag.

It must be said quite drastically: for big industry, the political position of information and influence that it had created for itself during the 15 Weimar years collapsed without replacement when Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933. The previous parliamentary bases and relations in the Reichstag lost their value, press and film influence were no longer possible, and the friendly German Nationalists very soon disappeared from the government of the Reich and the Länder. The diplomatic circles were scoured. Hardly any old familiar district administrator, lord mayor, government president or chief president remained in his post. Everywhere one looked: new people. Only the connections to the middle-level ministerial bureaucracy remained, but their influence was greatly diminished. For the professional industrial associations, the presidents of the chambers of industry and commerce and for the Reich Group "Industry," the previous exponents of big industry were no longer in demand and only a few were tolerated. For the NSDAP was undoubtedly anti-capitalist in its self-image. Politically, big industry was faced with a vacuum. It is necessary to say all this with all clarity in order to make clear the whole nonsense of the claims, which were originally launched by the communist side and quickly taken up by numerous "historians" of the "GDR":

Business or big industry would have brought Hitler to power or financed him before and after the seizure of power. This has nothing in common with the facts. Of course, in 1932 and early 1933, big industrialists could not have known how it would all turn out in 1933/34. But they began to suspect it when Papen became a 'failure' for them. It was not until 1932 that new ties were forged with the NSDAP (the real name, "National Socialist Workers' Party") was fatal to them.

It was difficult enough and, apart from less significant regional contacts, was done centrally for the Reich as a whole essentially in four ways. Hitler gave his economic advisor at the time, Wilhelm Keppler, a very successful Baden factory owner, the suggestion to gather informal advisors around him in order to broaden his field of vision and to prepare his macroeconomic information and relations, and thus the "Keppler Circle of Friends" was formed. to which Himmler later established relations. Keppler recruited personalities of his circle of acquaintances, initially from medium-sized industry, for this purpose. The closer the hour of X approached, the easier it was. But no people were presented for it, at most they were accepted, and they had to be of Keppler's type, possess great economic experience as well as common sense, be rather staid, neither ambitious nor pompous. Schacht loosely belonged to this group and introduced his associate Blessing. From the Reich Finance Ministry, there was Ministerial Director Olscher, a Helferich brother who was a successful textile industrialist, the banker Baron v. Schröder, the former submarine commander Steinbrink from the Flick Group, as well as Bosch and Oetker; there were relations with Siemens.

All this is more or less known. I knew them all later after 1933, and much has been written about them. There was talk about shaping the future, about overcoming unemployment, but little about money: Keppler was too shy and clumsy for that - not the right man. But in the time of scarce money, funds were also made liquid from this circle for the Reich leadership of the NSDAP. Gauleitungen, Kreisleitungen, Ortsgruppen had to finance themselves . Understandably, the money flowed more abundantly from 1933. Another connection ran through "Mayor Winkler" and through Walter Funk, at that time known and respected in industry, especially in heavy industry, as a highly capable editor-in-chief of the "right-wing" Berlin stock exchange newspaper and economic expert. In 1933 he became Goebbels' Secretary of State and in 1938 Reich Minister of

Economics. He already knew more about money and made many a check loose, not without praising his financial backers - among them "Staatsrat" v. Stauss of the Deutsche Bank. He brought his friends and patrons together with Hitler's right-hand man, Hermann Göring, who had a clever way of encouraging donations. Göring, after all, was finally "out of our box" - as they said in those days - for Funk's friends to talk to: World War I fighter pilot and Pour-le-merite recipient. Finally, there was the great Thyssen, who arranged the "famous" meeting of industrialists in Düsseldorf and gave Hitler the opportunity to speak to this "illustrious" circle of real big industry and also arranged for payments to the party.

But these were not huge sums (they grew later with the successes):

RM 100,000 to 150,000 per company - one is even said to have written a check for RM 250,000; in the times of economic crisis, that was a lot of money, even for entrepreneurs.

For the NSDAP, however, these were only drops in the bucket of the money needed for political propaganda, the vigorously fought election campaigns and the publication of party newspapers. Local groups, district leaderships and Gau leaderships, which before 1933 worked quite predominantly with volunteers and voluntary helpers , financed themselves from the monthly dues and donations of their members , which at that time had already exceeded the million mark, and the flood of meetings and the great printing effort were financed by the millions of voters (Hitler received in the Reich presidential election of 1932 = 11,3 million votes), who at all rallies, election events and street collections "for the fighting treasure of the NSDAP" put their money into the collection boxes held out everywhere or who openly or discreetly delivered their not always small mites to the local group.

The Reich leadership was financed within the party by a kind of matriculation contributions (as the Länder contributions to the Reich are called). But the expenses for the leading National Socialists traveling everywhere to events or - like Hitler - traveling by airplane, speaking all over the country, were great. The payments from industry came in extremely handy, of course, but they were certainly not vital for Hitler's struggle and victory, but a pleasant addition, nothing more. **The financing of big industry certainly did not help Hitler to power! For the relations an example:**

For the first Winter Relief Fund in 1933 (!), i.e. still at the time of great need, the people donated - one must see this in relation to the high purchasing power of money at that time - 350 million RM! According to estimates at that time, large donations accounted for no more than 50 to 75 million marks. The greater part was raised in the form of medium and small amounts!

Big Industry and the State in the Third Reich

To say it right here:

Neither has big business as a group bought influence, nor has it at any time had any real weighty influence.

Before 1933 and after 1933, large industrialists as a group, as individuals and as company managers were uncertain what to think of and expect from a National Socialist government. In their majority and as a group, they therefore tended to adopt a wait-and-see, skeptical or even apprehensive attitude. This was especially true in the period leading up to the Röhm putsch, the death of Hindenburg, and Bugenberg's departure from the government. After that, the regime appeared consolidated, powerful and purposeful. Hitler had the party and the state completely under control, social peace seemed to be stabilized, the backbone of the misery of unemployment was broken, purchasing power grew, production and national income increased steadily, successes of agricultural policy and agricultural market organization became visible. The revolutionary storm was over. One could hope again, it seemed.

The abundance of public investment and the first effects of remilitarization made themselves felt in the construction industry and heavy industry, and large investments in the raw materials industry were just around the corner. The first armaments orders were placed, an aeronautics industry was launched, the shipyards received orders ; the economic revival was unmistakable. At the same time, the political horizon was less cloudy. Hitler's foreign policy activities, however, seemed extremely daring, but the withdrawal from the League of Nations, the military occupation of the area on the left bank of the Rhine passed without any particular scandal; a f often agreement was concluded with Great Britain, a kind of non-aggression pact with Poland, friendly relations developed with Italy, mutually beneficial goods exchange agreements with the states of southeastern Europe were added; the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 were also an international success; the surprising, sensational annexation of Austria was accepted.

There followed a horrific setback:

The events of the "Reichskristallnacht" (November 9, 1938) and the completely unexpected and illogical intensification of anti-Semitic measures created both indignation and uncertainty at home. But they also worsened the foreign policy climate around the world and brought severe slumps in exports. Industry was again shocked and unsettled. They raised their voices, probably mainly with reference to the damage to foreign trade relations, but felt more or less helpless - and they were. After all, they had not even had the opportunity to prevent Schacht's departure as Reich Minister of Economics, which shocked big industry. In spite of many good personal relations, especially with many Wehrmacht offices, with Göring and his staff, there could be no question of political influence. Relationships and influence did not extend beyond the possibility of personal ideas in the interests of one's own companies, in matters of government orders or desired participation in new investments (unfortunately also in aryanizations) or problems of lesser importance. The only earlier attempt by the steel industry to oppose the establishment of the Salzgitter steelworks on the basis of German iron ore in 1936 failed completely.

Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop maintained hardly any relations with industry; he acted rather aloof. Relations with the Foreign Office were of no use, since von Ribbentrop himself maintained rather loose relations with his own ministry. In the decision-making process on important political questions, the AA was much less involved than before, if only for reasons of secrecy; besides, there was no organization that would have enabled any group, however important, to influence foreign policy decisions or otherwise. Hitler's style of leadership simply did not permit this. As is well known, not even the Reich Cabinet was consulted, let alone involved in decision-making. In his foreign policy activities, Hitler was apparently of the opinion that only the utmost secrecy would allow successful action.

To that extent, then, the style of government was purely dictatorial. However, this only applied to the matters that Hitler himself took charge of.

There was also no organizational headquarters, no all-encompassing flow of orders from the top down, no information process from the bottom up. Hitler wanted to be informed or approached for instructions only upon explicit request. Goering, each Reich minister and any special agents at all levels had free decision-making authority in their field of work. On overriding economic or armaments policy problems, individuals - though rarely - were called in as experts by Goering, or in wartime by Hitler himself. The Wehrmacht units made broad use of the cooperation of expert personalities from the business world and in technical questions of armament, but all this had nothing to do with politics and political influence. The business community did not act as a partner or even an equal partner of the state, but rather as a subordinate body, for instance as a servant of the state, like the civil service or the Wehrmacht.

The essence of the Fuehrer state, the dictatorship, manifested itself mainly in the fact that state and government occupied a higher level than, for example, in the Weimar Republic; for - according to the state philosophy - the NSDAP and 'the Fuehrer' alone represented the will of the people and enforced it. There were no parties apart from the NSDAP; the earlier ones had been dissolved.

There were no economic, social, or 'societal' forces that could have acted or felt like partners of the government or that could have accepted the demands of groups. When, in complete disregard of this principle, a certain Kessler wanted to establish himself in 1933 as "leader of the economy" and to begin to act as such as an equal partner vis-à-vis the Reich Minister of Economics, he was immediately recalled, with Hitler's approval, by Posse, the then acting permanent secretary of the Reich Ministry of Economics. It was then the non-National Socialist Dr. Schacht who, in 1934, by means of the Law for the Preparation of the Organic Structure of the German Economy and the subsequent laws, set up a very logical and skilful seamless economic organization which was subject to the instructions of the Reich Minister of Economics, i.e. the state, and which also required his approval in personnel matters.

This economic organization should realize the principle:

State directive, economic executive. The NSDAP as a party had almost no influence on this economic organization, which proved itself extraordinarily as an instrument of the state in peacetime, for example, especially in the organization of foreign trade, and in wartime in its participation in the war economy. Apart from this economic organization, there were other interlockings of the state in the economy. For example, in the "Compulsory Community of the German Lignite Industry" initiated by Schacht as the financial basis for hydrogenating fuel from lignite, or in the recruitment of economists for the state executive forced by Hitler's economic commissioner Wilhelm Keppler. Professor Krauch (IG- Farben) was appointed chairman of the board of the lignite-gasoline company supported by the "compulsory community" and brought with him many employees from the "IG-Farben". He transferred to Göring's "Office for German Raw Materials and Materials" and later also became head of the Reich Office for Economic Expansion and Göring's "General Plenipotentiary for Special Chemical Tasks." The broad involvement of IG-Farben AG was almost a matter of course, since most of the inventions of synthetically produced raw materials were based on years of research and development work by the IG. For the other types of raw materials, Keppler appointed Pleiger and me as economists to his raw materials staff.

The principle of having economists run the economy expanded more and more in peace and war, right up to the Speer era. But all those who were appointed in this way automatically left the ranks of the economy, so to speak, and became state officials as a sideline because of their knowledge and abilities, and they had to be aware of this; for the most part, they were. In principle, one could say:

IG Farben did not influence the state through Krauch, but the state influenced IG through Krauch. And it was not the steel industry that gained influence on the expansion of steel capacities through Pleiger, but the other way around.

The spear - era

And in the Speer era: The numerous committee and ring leaders from industry in Speer's Ministry of Armaments governed industry for Speer and not, for example, Speer for industry. It was not the coal industry that had influence on the state through the later Reichsvereinigung Kohle (RVK), but the RVK enforced - executive independent - the directives of the state. It should not be misunderstood that with the extraordinary breadth that this principle gained, not all economists could quickly enough find themselves in the role of state-only representatives, and thus conflicts of interest arose. But every regulation and every principle is almost complete when it works 80% of the time, and that was certainly the case at that time. During the war, hundreds of economists identified themselves with the state, which held the well-being and fate of its population in its hands without restriction, whether we liked it or not. The question of an opposition or even revolution of the economy did not arise at any time, not even among those who had lost their trust in the state or disapproved of it. The question, also asked by historians, why did the economy "do nothing" is unreal. It had no power, it had no one to lean on for thoughts of a coup d'état. They were in a boat in heavy storm:

rocking promised no salvation. The officers' conspiracy of July 20 had no one behind them either. They just did not know it.

The grotesqueness to which "historians" of the "GDR" can distort the relationship between the state and industry is shown by the assertion that Kehrl, as the "representative of monopoly capital," was the actual doer in central planning and that the members of central planning were only staffage. There was certainly no one in big industry who would have regarded me, of all people, as the "representative of big industry," especially since I was also known as a National Socialist.

Economy and Rearmament in the Third Reich

In an earlier section of this paper, it has already been shown that neither the economic administration nor industry were informed about Hitler's intended foreign policy activities and about his long-term foreign policy goals, if there were any at all. Reconciliation with France was pursued at various levels, including in the party organization:

A final renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, but not of the Saar region, was prepared propagandistically. As far as anyone knew, Great Britain, Belgium and Holland were considered taboo in foreign policy and military terms. Remilitarization and rearmament were the only real indications of the possibility of future military involvement, because they could not be concealed. Every attentive observer in economic administration and industry could draw conclusions from barracks and aircraft construction, from the increase in garrisons, from the newly built aircraft factories and their output, and from orders for clothing and equipment on the one hand and for weapons on the other.

The backlog in all branches of the armed forces caused by the 100,000-man army was so great that, at least until 1938, nothing conspicuous appeared that would have suggested far-set goals. In 1936, Dr. Schacht, in his capacity as Reich Minister of Economics, was appointed "General Plenipotentiary for the Economy" (GBW) (including the agricultural, financial and labor ministries) in the event of an imminent threat of war - the so-called MOB case (mobilization case) - and a system of mobilization preparations was institutionalized in all ministries, but this did not cause a stir. The 100,000-man professional army had not needed mobilization preparations: it had been a cadre army. When Funk succeeded Schacht as Reich Minister of Economics in 1938, he too became GBW; Funk was certainly not a martial figure, as one might imagine a general plenipotentiary in wartime. In his capacity as GBW, a state secretary was attached to him only for mob preparations, initially with the civil servant state secretary Dr. Posse. In the RWM and in military departments, people joked that these two personnel decisions would be "a convincing proof of peace" for Hitler. Both were difficult to imagine as "crisis managers" in wartime.

The program of the Four-Year Plan, which I became aware of in its entirety at that time, including the military sector, did not contain anything that would not have had to be done sensibly in the same orders of magnitude anyway because of the lack of foreign currency and the raw material import requirements of our industrial economy, even though at the same time the officers working in the Office for German Raw Materials and Materials and in the Economic and Armaments Staff of General Thomas did not tire of representing so-called "demands of the Wehrmacht" as urgent in all areas. But actually only the capacities for aviation fuel and explosives and their precursors, and perhaps aluminum for the Luftwaffe, would not have been necessary for the expected overall economic development in the event of peace on this scale. There was nothing perceptible at that time of a genuine methodical master plan for the Wehrmacht, which should have fought a major war. There were many, often unrelated individual plans of numerous services (according to the proven military principle: too much demand never hurts, shortage makes trouble). However, there was no question of well thought-out planning for a major war. There was not even the slightest clarity about the real requirements. In the unexpectedly short Polish War of 1939, for example, the Luftwaffe had completely run out of bombs, i.e. at the end of the war it was almost out of stock. For the French war, however, many times the ammunition requirements of the artillery were available. (In the "Blitzkrieg" the artillery fired less than had been calculated).

(From the armament plans, neither the economic administration nor the armament industry could read or even guess the imminence of a great war, let alone a world war. It is not too much to say that the real armament for war began only during the war! Also military facts prove this clearly).

At the end of August 1939, before the outbreak of the Polish War, members of the 1896-1900 age group were drafted into the Wehrmacht overnight on a large scale in order to fill up the active troops with soldiers who had war experience from the First World War. The enlisted men, NCOs, and sergeants were to shore up the active units, so to speak, with a corset of war veterans. These cohorts were discharged soon after the end of the Polish War.

At the beginning of the war in August 1939, the German Reich's neighbors far outnumbered it in military units and numbers of soldiers ready for war, even if only France and Poland are taken into account. After the march against Poland, there remained for the Western Front a whole 18 reserve divisions, eight active divisions and not a single armored division. They were opposed by 110 French divisions! At the outbreak of war, our fuel supplies covered an assumed requirement of 4 to 5 months at full mobilization.

Remilitarization and armament were in full swing at the outbreak of the world war, but had not yet reached by far the strength of the armed forces surrounding us. It was therefore only natural that economic administration and industry, purely emotionally, without knowledge of the exact military figures, followed developments since the Munich Agreement with great concern and deep skepticism. Here the disarmament of Czechoslovakia by military blackmail was the real turning point. Hitler had not given a guarantee for the rest of Czechoslovakia in writing in Munich, but he had clearly held out the prospect of it; for the first time, non-Germans were subordinated to the sovereignty of the Reich. Both had to cost us - in our opinion - the confidence of the world. The opening of the war against Poland and the declaration of war by England and France then threw wide open the gates to a future threatened with danger.

War as a way out?

Was rearmament necessary for the improvement of the internal economic structure of the Reich?

Did the overall economic situation in 1938/39 drive Hitler to war in order to prevent his popularity from plummeting with new successes, or because the economic situation forced him to take this expansionist substitute action?

Both theses can only be described as completely made up out of thin air, even absurd.

1 Hitler's popularity, as already described, had reached a peak in 1938/39 that could hardly be exceeded. Politically, the full incorporation of the territory on the left bank of the Rhine into the sovereignty of the Reich had been achieved, and the incorporation of Austria and the Sudetenland, which was approved by the entire nation, had been accomplished without a stroke of the sword. The Saar region again belonged fully to the Reich. The discriminatory restrictions of the Versailles Treaty in the military field (100,000-man professional army, no air force, no navy) had been eliminated. The German Reich had equal rights in all areas.

2. unemployment, which was destroying the economy and the nation, had been overcome, as described above, full employment had been achieved from the end of 1938, and even at the same time the German foreign debt had been reduced from RM 19 billion in February 1933 to RM 9 billion in 1938.

No, rearmament was not a necessary engine of the national economy in 1938/39; on the contrary, it hindered an equal development of all sectors of industry, since, for example, the consumer durables and consumer goods industry was disadvantaged by a lack of foreign exchange and raw

material quota allocations compared to the industry involved in armament and was hindered in machinery investments.

3. Ley's labor front planned extensive social investments and the Ministry of Food had a large program of mechanization and motorization of agriculture in store, indeed the establishment of a complete cold chain from the producer to the last consumer for perishable agricultural products - at that time still a completely new idea - was being prepared! By today's standards, motorization was only just beginning, the Reichsbahn had major investment plans, and even exports, especially to Southeastern Europe and South America, could have been substantially increased if only the necessary quotas had been available. Buildings for the merchant fleet could have been favored instead of the preferred war fleet. Investment and production ideas had been bubbling up everywhere with the dynamism that the revival of industry had released from the torpor of the crisis years. All this was prevented by the preference for armaments and armament investments. Without war and without new "living space," the economy and the people could have faced a successful future.

4 Some authors seem to suspect or consider possible other "domestic political motives" of Hitler.

I quote only some references from the contributions to the collective work. Forstmeier/Volkmann "Economy and Armament on the Eve of the Second World War"!

Timothy W. Mason speaks, among other things, of "signs of crisis at home, of an inflationary disruption of the German money and credit economy" or of the fact that "the state finances had come apart at the seams," of the fact that "DAF (German Labor Front) completely failed," of an "export fatigue," of "a severe social tension," even of "the dismantling of sociopolitical achievements" (page 189) - without making clear what he means by this. And finally, "the willingness to make sacrifices on the part of the ruled was not there".

Allan S. Milward even speaks of "an extreme anti-worker policy", Hans-Erich Volkmann of an "insurmountable crisis situation in 1938/39".

Here, apparently, conclusions have been drawn far too far from source material not known to me and not mentioned by the authors. General Thomas, for example, often uncritically adopted the deliberate pessimism of Schacht or also of the Price Commissioner Wagner or perhaps also of the weekly or monthly reports of the S.D., which I read very frequently.

One thing I can say firmly as a contemporary, fully oriented observer and contributor:

"In 1938/39, there could be no talk of "severe social tensions," of "an extreme anti-worker policy," or of the fact that the "DAF failed completely. And the fact that there was a "high willingness to make sacrifices on the part of the dominated" was irrefutably proven by the course of the war. On this issue I would like to quote exceptionally from my book "Crisis Managers in the Third Reich". (S. 45)

"Some time ago I read in an article by the Countess Dönhoff in the 'Zeit':

'Actually, it is amazing that with the diverse representation available to the citizen from the parents' council to the parliament, the feeling of not being involved today grows into such unbearable oppression - whereas in Hitler's time, when individual opinion didn't count at all, the majority felt they could make an infinite difference.'

It was simply the feeling at that time that not 'they' effected something,

but that 'we' effected something. Each was there, or could be there, if they wanted to be. I fear that the history of the hundreds of thousands of idealists who worked for the Labor Front, the Women's Association, the People's Welfare Organization, for "Strength through Joy," for "Mother and Child" will never be written. For those who remember the time, however, this was an important - if not the most important - content of the period of the Third Reich, which only receded more into the background with the beginning of the war.

Based on the ideas of the law 'on the order of national labor', the social spirit and responsibility of the entrepreneurs was awakened and mobilized on the broadest front. Years of successful cooperation with the shop stewards and the Labor Front resulted in the main purpose, the overcoming of class struggle thinking and the elimination of the strike as a possible means of struggle to a surprising extent."

Only one thing I have to add to this quotation now: I have well-founded hope that the history of the social policy of the Third Reich will soon be written by a highly competent party.

In many cases, the economic development is treated historically in a more accurate way. It has been traced, for example, in "Foreign Trade and Rearmament in Germany 1933 to 1939" on pages 81 to 111 (not 112) in a completely accurate manner.

5. also Timothy W. Mason cannot be contradicted that "a tremendous inflation had started" - only after the experiences from the past and the present the word "tremendous" is by far too exaggerated -, and the "finances (also in 1938/39) began to become critical", especially since just in these two years (but only then !) "the international armament boom" began to have an effect.

But as far as I know, there can be no talk of a real crisis or even a threatening crisis at this point in time.

It is also true that it could be assumed that "the financial needs of the public sector would continue to grow" and that "permanent foreign exchange shortages" would intensify. But despite all this, the situation was not crisis-ridden at the time. The problem described by Mason was also one of the points of contention that led to Dr. Schacht's resignation as Reich Economics Minister in 1938 and as Reichsbank President in January 1939.

Funk replaced him in both functions. He, the men of his Reichsbank directorate and even the Reich Finance Minister Schwerin-Krosigh were knowledgeable and imaginative personalities and certainly of rather cautious natures. Naturally, they immediately met to take stock of the situation. There was no reason to panic. Finances and inflationary developments would be kept under control without the need for spectacular measures.

Both were still under control as 1940 drew to a close and the occupied territories and Italy's economic situation posed difficult problems.

Monetary control, strict foreign exchange management, commodity and production control, and price controls had been developed in recent years into a set of instruments that was respectable and allowed considerable flexibility. However, neither Darre, cited by some historians as a witness, nor General Thomas and his economic and armaments staff were familiar with the nature, operation and interlocking of this set of instruments.

Even Schacht's pessimistic predictions hardly came true, at least until the outbreak of the Russian war.

⁶ Timothy W. Mason writes in his repeatedly mentioned article (on page 165):

"Even in the summer of 1939, a predatory war was certainly not the only way out of this impasse."

Very true! A war of robbery was not planned at all, perhaps for the simple reason that nobody in the Reich seemed to know that in the Dutch, Belgian and French ports enormous quantities of rhodium were stored for the preparation of war. And one could have known it! For the "BI Z" in Basel. "Bank for International Settlements", had faithfully and dutifully reported on these special imports and deposits on an ongoing basis. But these reports were probably not read by the departmentally responsible, perhaps because they were too secret! When I visited the newly occupied territories of the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France by car in the first week of June 1940, I also visited the ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and Calais, among others, which were crammed with imports also or especially of raw materials of all kinds (almost exclusively precautionary purchases by the governments themselves).

Nobody had been interested in the contents of the warehouses until then. They were "secured" by guards of the OKW and the Navy. The military services argued about who was entitled to the spoils of war. No one seemed to be responsible for the fact that the contents of the harbor and the deeply staggered warehouses inland were extremely endangered by possible air raids and the resulting wildfires, just as apparently no one in England's and France's armed forces was responsible for such easily accomplished destruction by air raids.

I had estimated the stored quantities of various raw materials over my thumb and informed General von Hanneken upon my return. Neither he, as the person responsible for raw materials in the RMW, nor General Thomas had heard of this or, in any case, had even been interested in it. I arranged with the OKW for immediate removal by civilian agencies. (The Intendantur would have been too slow). The seizure of these holdings, which then proceeded swiftly, was incidentally completely unobjectionable under international law, since almost all of it was state property, which was to be classified as "booty" under the Hague Regulations. Through tough negotiations with the OKW, it was finally determined that all raw material stocks were subject to the disposition power of the Reich Ministry of Economics.

"Autarky" - part of the NS - Weltanschauung?

In 1968, Dieter Petzina - probably as the first - presented a thorough work which, by carefully evaluating all sources available at the time and, above all, also statistics, traces the agricultural policy, the raw materials policy, the foreign exchange policy and, to some extent, the foreign trade policy of the Third Reich in the years 1933-1939 quite accurately on the whole.

However, I would like to contribute to this with some short additions and additional considerations:

1. I am not aware of any leader in the Third Reich who would have propagated "autarky" as a slogan or issued it as an indispensable part of a Nazi living space policy.
2. some casual remarks by Mr. Petzina might give the impression that autarky policy was part of any effort to "*establish an anti-liberal economic system*" (page 10). Elsewhere, it briefly states : ". . . that the Four-Year Plan was intended to detach Germany from the world economic alliance" (page 18). The loosening of a world economic alliance - if there could be any talk of such an alliance at all in this concrete form in the 1930s after the catastrophic economic crisis - was at most the inevitable consequence of a lack of foreign exchange and a decline in exports, but not a goal to be pursued.

3 Petzina himself points out that the "important source of his investigations", due to the lack of other documentary material, was material from the former Wehrwirtschafts- und Rüstungsamt, which was headed by Colonel Thomas. This material may be used for historical investigations only with a certain caution. I was personally well acquainted with Colonel Thomas, especially since he was related to the Lower Lusatian cloth industry, so I also reliably know that he was closely associated with Schacht at that time and later. This may explain in part that Thomas, in his extensive elaborations, notes and minutes, saw much simply through Schacht's glasses, and Schacht, to put it mildly, was by no means inclined to great objectivity when he argued.

4 Schacht was clearly completely wrong on at least three important points.

- a)** He presumed with excessive arrogance and in an impossible style to criticize the agricultural policy of the Reich Minister of Food Darres and to demand changes, although Darre was in no way subordinate to him, but on an equal footing. At that time I continuously received copies of the exchanged letters about these contexts from both sides.
- b)** Schacht refused to allocate foreign currency to the REM, which the latter had rightly requested in order to be able to more adequately supply the economic sector under his, Schacht's, control with foreign currency. He thus wanted to act as a judge in his own cause.
- c)** The fact that Schacht, as president of the Reichsbank, administered the foreign exchange did not mean that he had any power of disposal. If two departments did not agree, only the Reich Chancellor was entitled to make the decision. Hitler therefore also logically transferred the power to decide on foreign exchange for the future to Göring as his (quasi Reich Chancellor's) deputy.
- d)** In the face of Keppler and later also Göring, Schacht took the position that the production of substitutes (as he liked to call it, although this term was frowned upon) would only be "economically justifiable" if they were not more expensive than foreign raw materials. This assertion was as arbitrary as it was illogical. It was directed mainly against Buna, against German iron ore and chemical fibers. If we did not have enough foreign currency to cover our needs for these raw materials, it was impossible to conclude from this that we should not use expensive Buna or expensive chemical fibers.

It would have been just as logical if Schacht had taken the position: If we could not export profitably, we would have to refrain from exporting, because an export loss would be economically "unjustifiable". Here, however, Schacht took a completely different position. In the "new plan", exports were massively promoted by means of export subsidies of up to 60% of the achievable sales prices. Schacht's motives were thus obviously other than "economic justifiability." jj5 . Petzina writes about the period of the foreign exchange crisis in 1936, among other things:

"Goering initially tried to evade a decision by ordering the registration of all "foreign securities in German possession, as well as the accelerated collection of German merchandise outstanding and the possible realization of German foreign holdings. ""

It is not recognized here that the "foreign exchange crisis" was mainly due to the fact that the exporting economy, especially in the last twelve months, had shown a tendency not to press for rapid payment of outstanding debts; in many cases, it preferred to know that foreign exchange balances abroad were freely available in any case and therefore not only not to press for their prompt payment, but - as it seemed - in some cases even?

I myself had ascertained this fact through spot checks in my chamber of commerce district and advised Keppler to take appropriate action on the part of the Reichsbank, which promptly met with sufficient success. It was therefore by no means a question of "exhausting the last resources," as Petzina thinks, but of eliminating an erroneous development.

So what was autarky really all about? Petzina rightly points out that the term autarky has a history going back a long way . In the "Ploetz - Excerpt from History -" the word "autarky" is listed in the subject index on five pages, for the first time in archaic times, for the second time the word is mentioned in Egyptian history under the Ptolomaeans, then in the context of Mexico's economic policy during the Second World War and finally in connection with Argentina's economic policy between 1944 and 1946. The Brockhaus 1921 defines autarky "as the economic form of a state that is economically independent from foreign countries as a result of possessing fertile soil, mineral resources and sources of power (coal and water)." Unfortunately, we were none of these. What is or was falsely attacked as autarky policy was nothing else than thoughtful, intensive, comprehensive, pragmatic action in an economic crisis situation. This had nothing whatsoever to do with Weltanschauung or National Socialist ideas.

This is perhaps the appropriate place to counter some other misconceptions:

I have been asked by historians, for example, whether the economic administration was influenced or hindered in its actions by National Socialist philosophies or ideological objectives. It wasn't. Political concepts such as racism, Lebensraum expansion or even Germanization, were simply not present in the economic policy sphere. Germanization was rather a private philosophy of Himmler in the SS sphere, based on the hazy idea that Germanic hereditary races were more valuable than other races and therefore relations with peoples of Germanic origin had to be particularly close. Such dreams had no place in economic policy. Nor were those involved in economic policy approached in any way in order to gain influence. In the Third Reich, the economy and economic policy had no place in foreign policy either. We were not involved in any way in the shaping of foreign policy. When decisions were made, we were informed only late and imperfectly.

In theory, of course, the Foreign Office was responsible for foreign policy, but that was more theory. For real foreign policy took place in the smallest circles at a high level:

Hitler, Reich Foreign Minister, his State Secretary, some ministerial directors of the AA, and important ambassadors. The Foreign Office was staffed in its ministerial bureaucracy in about the same way as ever. Even von Ribbentrop did not change this, although he went around with drastic plans. There was only one part of foreign policy on which the bureaucracy of the Foreign Office claimed and largely enforced a priority, and that wasthe conclusion of foreign trade treaties. Here, the Foreign Office leadership and bureaucracy jealously guarded that they had to determine the guidelines of foreign trade treaties, whatever they were thought to be. The guidelines arose almost inevitably from the climate that existed with the individual states, but for the rest, the negotiation of foreign trade treaties is, after all, an entirely pragmatic matter. It is true that the Foreign Office could press with the Ministry of Economics that the never-ending desires of Italy should be satisfied to some extent, or that Spain should be given significant promises of supplies if it entered the war on our side (which was not possible), or, finally, that the trade treaty desires of southern Europe should be treated as carefully as possible. Here, however, political influence already ended.

When I spoke of "economic administration" in the previous paragraph, I meant not only the Reich Ministry of Economics, but also the ministerial organization of the Four-Year Plan. It was not very extensive, and I knew pretty much everyone who worked there. But I do not remember a single person who claimed to be a convinced supporter of National Socialism, or who would have been believed if he had claimed this. Even in the Reich Ministry of Economics, committed National Socialists were an absolute minority. It is possible that newly appointed assessors or government councillors had a party card, but that did not really matter, because we were not really involved in politics. The differences lay more in temperament: we National Socialists displayed less caution, less timidity, less bureaucratism, and we possibly possessed more responsibility, more assertiveness, more speed, perhaps also more objective commitment.

Finally, and probably mainly, we National Socialists were optimistic, the bureaucracy of yore and now even more so rather pessimistic and skeptical.

The economic administration had little room for maneuver. Everything revolved around the "resources", their increase as far as it was within our possibility, the economical use of them, the sensible distribution in the present and preparation for a blackening future. Through the responsible military commanders, we advised the administration in the occupied territories. In 1943, I went to Italy with my Minister Funk to advise our ally on how he could better manage his resources. In the course of the last years of the war, of course, the main problem was always to free up resources for armaments and still maintain economic life as best we could.

For us, this was not politics. It was crisis management in the truest sense of the word. That's why I called my book "*Crisis Managers in the Third Reich*".

Power structures

In a contribution to the anthology "Wirtschaft und Rüstung am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkrieges" (Economy and Armament on the Eve of the Second World War), Eike Henning takes exception at one point to the fact that "for Ernst Nolte" in the Führer movement "only the Führer can make binding statements". But this was indeed the case. **Hitler's power was expressed in the fact that he totally ruled party and state. Personnel decisions in the top leadership region of party and state could only be made by him and were only made by him.** This applied to Reich ministers, Reich governors and ambassadors in the state as well as to the highest SA and SS leaders and Reich leaders and Gauleiters in the party organization. Any of these holders of power could be recalled at any time without it being conceivable that they would ever have resisted or even prevailed with it. Strangely enough, this also applies to the period of the last half or three quarters of the war, when Hitler - in my opinion - was no longer capable of governing. It also extends to the highest-ranking exercisers of power, such as Göring or Himmler (or to Gauleiter); they all possessed, as it were, only derivative power.

It would have been inconceivable that the power that one of the greats had could have been used by them against Hitler. Of course, there were personalities who had great influence. But power and influence are quite different categories. Hitler's style of leadership, about which I will write separately, was in all areas geared to the fact that he himself wanted to make as "few decisions as possible. He also did not want to be continuously informed about everything that was happening or even the most important events in all areas without necessity or even to be asked for instructions. Hitler formed for himself temporal and factual decision focal points on which he concentrated exclusively. However, it also happened that he - rather rarely - took decisions on individual problems.

But in general it was true that, for example, every Gauleiter, Reich Minister or "Reich Commissioner" in occupied territories could decide everything at his own discretion, unless he did not trust himself to make his own decision in a particular case. The same principle applied to special representatives at all levels.

It was not necessary for anyone with authority or power to reach "agreement" with committees or individuals. This - dangerous - system was the basis for the quick-wittedness and speed with which a giant organization temporarily functioned unbureaucratically over large parts of Europe.

"Fascism" in the Third Reich - communist labeling fraud

If one opens the "Ploetz", extract from history, edition 1968, one reads in the summary to newest history on page 1211 u.f. .

"While Bolshevik rule is asserting itself domestically with all ruthlessness and Russia is developing into a formidable industrial power, Europe is ailing from the antagonisms which were not eliminated in 1919 but

multiplied. In terms of constitutional policy, this is accompanied by a general 'crisis of democracy', in terms of economic policy by a lagging behind of the potential of the European states in relation to the development of the great world powers. The emerging contrast between the world-revolutionary Bolshevik Russia on the one hand, and the United States of America and Western Europe on the other, is masked in the 1930s by the expansionist policies of the Germans, Italians and Japanese, who are constricted in contrast to the other great nations. In Italy and Germany, new political ideologies and constitutional forms are developed in Fascism and National Socialism, in which the crisis of democracy is supposed to be overcome and the militant defense against Bolshevism expressed."

In historical articles on the economic and social history of the Third Reich, one encounters, especially among "historians" in the "GDR," that "National Socialism" is generally replaced by "fascism. The generations growing up in the "GDR" should not even learn that there were national socialist even that the NSDAP was a "workers' party". At the same time, "capitalism" is apparently to be included and stamped as partly to blame - or even the main culprit - for the war, in which the entrepreneurs are accused of a "fascist power structure". This alienation is also taken over amazingly unconcerned by not a few "historians" and "historiographers" in the Federal Republic of Germany, **although they should know that it is a real falsification of history.**

There were no fascists, no fascist power structures and no fascist organization in the Third Reich. **The name "fascism" or "fascist" was never used even by opponents of National Socialism in the Third Reich, and not even by the victors when they occupied the German Reich. They spoke simply of "Nazis and Nazism.**

In his book "Die deutsche Diktatur - Entstehung, Struktur und Folgen des Nationalsozialismus" (The German Dictatorship - Origin, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism), the historian Karl Dietrich Bracher was the first to give an overall account of National Socialism that is relevant to state policy. Fortunately, he has now supplemented this work with the book "Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen zum Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie" (Piper series, volume 142).

Bracher introduces the word "totalitarianism" as a generic term in which all threats to "freedom" are united. He compresses the characteristics of totalitarianism - may they be right or left - thus:

"Exclusive claim to leadership of a party and ideology, full control of all means of communication and all means of coercion."

Bracher points out that even when the totalitarian system, like Soviet communism, begins with collective leadership, the tendency toward the "cult of the leader" is immanent: Stalin, Mao, Castro.

The term "fascism" or "fascist" has increasingly lost its original meaning in recent years, if it ever had one. In a reflection on Bracher's book, Joachim Besser, formerly editor-in-chief of the Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, writes, among other things:

"Who is actually a fascist? The answer to this, if one wants to draw a sum from many political discussions, could be: anyone who doesn't suit me. In fact, the discussion about fascism has degenerated into ideology. It has completely lost the historical ground under its feet. Every non-Western democratic system is so buzzword-like anqualified,

although it may have only a few 'fascist' elements in it, if any. Strauss is called a fascist. Leftist students received the same accusation from Günter Grass, and the radical leftists in turn simplistically call everyone who disagrees with them fascists. Moscow's propaganda is running at the same speed. Anyone who disagrees with the Kremlin is a fascist, and social democrats are, for simplicity's sake, 'social fascists'. A term used in this way becomes meaningless, one is ashamed to use it anymore."

One thing is certain: anyone who uses the word "fascist" in connection with the history of the Third Reich is not trying to clarify historical facts, but to obfuscate or falsify them.

Hitler's leadership style

When I was called to Berlin at the end of 1934 by Wilhelm Keppler, the "representative of the Führer and Reich Chancellor for economic affairs," I not only threw myself into the special work assigned to me. As a provincial, I also wanted to find out as much as possible from the outset about the political landscape in which I was to work: about the most important personalities in the new era and their peculiarities, about the party's economic policy goals, about the intended organization of government, about Hitler's way of working, about the flow of information and about decision-making processes, and much more.

The most important source of information for me at that time was initially Keppler himself, who had known Hitler well for years. Soon I became acquainted with many personalities from the party and the state and began to form a certain picture for myself. My findings were further deepened and mostly confirmed when later, during the Wilhelm Straßens trial, I also had daily contact for over a year with Lammers and Meissner, who had headed the Reich Chancellery and the "Presidential Chancellery" respectively. They subsequently confirmed almost in everything the picture I had already gained earlier about what I would like to call "Hitler's style of leadership".

Keppler had once told me in the early weeks of our collaboration:

"You, as a precise Prussian who thinks in categories of order (and from Brandenburg an der Havel, to boot), will find it difficult to comprehend Hitler's way of thinking and working. For in many respects he has rather the temperament and perhaps also the way of thinking of an Austrian artist."

When Keppler had pressed him to revise the so-called program of the NSDAP, which still dated from 1923, was extremely inadequate and petty, and which, for example, had no meaningful value at all for the economy, Hitler strictly refused. In his opinion, work on party programs was harmful because discussion of them undermined the unity of the party through differences of opinion, and was also pointless because new problems were constantly arising, the solution of which should not be hindered by abstract theoretical definitions. According to Keppler, Hitler had also repeatedly and resolutely opposed state economy because it must lead to "uncreative bureaucratism". The greatest achievements in the economy - as elsewhere in life - came from individual personalities. As entrepreneurs, they must have sufficient freedom of movement, but must not gain influence on economic policy as a whole, e.g. through interest groups. This was the exclusive responsibility of the state as the trustee of the whole people.

Keppler and Hitler strictly rejected a development toward a corporative state, as had been initiated by Mussolini with the corporations. The economy must not become a state within the state. This attitude meant that the state should limit itself to a kind of guideline competence in economic policy

and, if possible, leave the implementation to organizations of trade and industry, with compulsory membership, but not only with certain rights, but above all with duties.

Hitler also had a high opinion of "Prussian administration". The Prussian civil servants would always have been full of integrity, dutiful, hard-working and also not unskilled, although very conservatively insistent and averse to change. He therefore did not need to intervene in the actual administration. But government and politics are by no means all administration. One could not expect quick, skillful reactions to new developments from the civil service. Quick decisions would not be their business. In the following observations, I will leave out the military sector altogether. A great deal has been written about it, and David Irving, in his book "Hitler and His Generals," has only recently made an outstanding contribution by presenting it in an undoctrinaire and realistic way.

From the point of view described above, Hitler - as I see it - drew the following consequences, which, among other things, determined his style of leadership:

1. he wanted to spend as little time as possible on administrative government work himself. The Reich Chancellery was headed by State Secretary, later Reich Minister, Lammers, who had formerly been responsible for constitution in the Reich Ministry of the Interior - a lawyer by training. He proved to be a master at drafting and justifying laws, ordinances, decrees and government pronouncements of all kinds.

As is well known, the Presidential Chancellery was responsible for Hitler's duties as head of state, the Reich Chancellery for his activities as Reich Chancellor. The head of the Presidential Chancellery was State Secretary, later State Minister, Meissner von Hindenburg. Both heads of the Chancellery had no power, but influence in their fields; in particular, Lammers determined what should be presented to Hitler in his capacity as Reich Chancellor and made mostly accepted suggestions for required reactions or responses. Hitler very soon signed pretty much everything Lammers submitted for his signature; he trusted him.

2 In Hitler's view, meetings in larger circles were a waste of time. Above all, they produced misgivings, caused time delays and hindered speedy action. Correct information or clarification without discussions could, if at all, be better and more quickly achieved through discussions in private or in the smallest circles. Hence his aversion to cabinet meetings, but also, for example, to meetings and discussions with the Gauleiters as a whole. Hitler also disapproved of the "exchange of notes" between the ministries. However, Lammers was to attend the ministerial meetings in any case, in order to be able to orient Hitler - if he considered this necessary.

3. in general, ministries and other administrative units were, according to their structure, way of working and way of thinking, unsuited to solve emerging problems and tasks swiftly and effectively, especially if they were based - as was often the case - on past failures. In the latter case, any responsible minister would naturally be inclined to fight the allegations of undesirable development as a means of self-justification or to delay the solution.

4 From all this emerges Hitler's special preference for special orders and special powers of all kinds. For the ministerial bureaucracy, of course, they were generally extremely troublesome, especially since demarcation difficulties often arose. Hitler, however, persisted, and Goering imitated him - but exaggerated - in having crises that occurred or new problems that arose dealt with outside the usual government machinery. Hitler was of the opinion that imaginative and energetic individuals, who were given urgent and time-limited tasks, should be given sufficient powers to work quickly. Friction and overlapping with existing or responsible organizations or departments had to be accepted if necessary. It was easier to tolerate a frustrated authority than a frustrated indispensable personality.

Here are a few examples:

When Hitler decided to generously expand the autobahns, it was not the Ministry of Transport that was given the task, but Fritz Todt. When the foreign exchange situation required a broadening of the raw material base, it was not the Reich Ministry of Economics but Wilhelm Keppler who was instructed to "carry out all those economic measures which, in view of the foreign exchange situation, are necessary to replace foreign raw materials by those from domestic production."

When this proved insufficient, Göring (not Schacht) was given broad authority in this area because of his proven clout. When inflationary phenomena set the price level in motion in 1936, the Reich Ministry of Economics and the Reich Ministry of Food were not instructed to counteract this in their areas, but Gauleiter Josef Wagner became "price commissioner" with far-reaching powers because the responsible ministries had slept through the development.

Everything that has been described so far has a strongly formalistic component. But Hitler's leadership style was by no means limited to this.

Hitler felt - with full justification - that he was a plebiscitary leader. The people had decided for him, not primarily for the NSDAP. And he considered the implementation of the goals he was striving for to be assured only if his authority among the people and the Partei was completely unchallenged.

Party "side government" was unacceptable, even unimaginable for him. After the Röhm putsch - which, contrary to some claims by historians and those who would like to be, was a real putsch (I had regional insight into it in the Kurmark Gau) - his leadership style was aimed at creating very clear conditions here.

"Power structures" were not to exist. After the putsch, the SA was deprived of power in terms of its tasks and personnel and led only a shadowy existence; moreover, it was made unmistakably clear to the Gauleiters - to the extent still necessary - that they had only regional tasks and powers and no influence beyond that. There was no NSDAP "Politbüro."

6 The history of the Gauleiter, their functions and their working methods has been recorded in an excellent contemporary historical research work: Peter Hüttenherger "Die Gauleiter - Zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP".

This work is of special quality and, in my opinion, accurately reflects the reality of the Third Reich. The summary and the general overview on the back of the article published in the series of the Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte is in my opinion formally and actually optimal.

It was also part of Hitler's leadership style that he repeatedly entrusted people he trusted from the ranks of the Gauleiter with special tasks in the state, such as Bürckel, Sauckel, Lohse, Josef Wagner, Koch, Kube, and that he kept faith with them - often beyond the limits of what was possible and profitable - the loyalty that had grown in the commonality of old days.

However, if Hitler issued such orders, the personalities in question were not acting in their capacity as Gauleiter, but as State Commissars, subordinate to Hitler in his capacity as Reich Chancellor and not in his capacity as party leader.

In conclusion, it must be clearly stated:

There was no one in party and state whom Hitler could not have recalled from his position at any moment: This overall construction precluded Hitler from having to contend with quarrels of any kind. In this respect, this state of affairs was an important prerequisite for his style of leadership; he did not need to waste manpower or time struggling with opposition in the party or government. And this state of omnipotence continued - quite incomprehensibly - even when Hitler

had long since passed the threshold of governability, which, according to my observations and ideas, was the case by June 1944 at the latest.

"German Socialism" in the Third Reich

When the NSDAP was founded under the name "National Socialist German Workers' Party," it was undoubtedly in conscious opposition to international Marxism and especially in sharp rejection of its basic idea, namely the necessity of class struggle. In its place was to come "German Socialism," which was not an apparatus, not a program, but an attitude.

In Brockhaus 123, the keyword "socialism" is formulated as follows:

"The epitome of ideological and economic theories and practical measures striving for a new order of life and economy with the strongest emphasis on the economic idea, as opposed to individualistic views of economy and society."

This was precisely the vague idea of German socialism. Hitler did not call for the struggle of all against all, but for the national community of "all Germans. His political struggle was directed at the class struggle of right and left. The soon introduced word of the "worker of the forehead and the fist" was meant to close a gap between manual laborers and intellectual workers and to appeal to the social sensibilities of the people. The state and the party, however, were to have the task and duty of helping the weak among the people to help themselves on behalf of the people as a whole. With this vision of the future, coupled with the demand for liberation from the Versailles dictate, Hitler became leader of a mass movement and eventually chancellor of the German Reich. From Gregor Strasser, the leader of the NSDAP faction in the Reichstag, comes the word about the "anti-capitalist longing of the German people" (according to Gauleiter Jordan in his book "*Im Zeugenstand der Geschichte*"). As far as I know, this "anti-capitalist longing" was also fulfilled by the overwhelming majority of the Gauleiters who had a strong influence on domestic political events, both in terms of their backgrounds and their life experiences. In this respect, they would undoubtedly be classified as "leftists," or at least as "left of center," according to today's ideas. In the period between the seizure of power and the first Reichstag elections in the Third Reich, in March 1933, Keppler asked Hitler whether it was not time to change the name of the party, since the party now addressed the entire German people and a very high proportion of its members came from agriculture and the petty bourgeois middle class. Hitler rejected this without a second thought. The name of the party should and must remain as it is now: Workers' Party (not Party of the Workers). That meant for the workers - and that was good. All National Socialists had to keep in mind that the workers needed the party's help the most. The other occupational groups could help themselves sooner.

After January 30, 1933, little time was lost in enforcing the basic ideas of ending the class struggle. The organs of the class struggle, trade unions and employers' associations, were dissolved. The traditional holiday of the working people, May 1, was declared a holiday of the whole people on May 1, 1933, as the day of "national labor".

Relations between entrepreneurs and factory employees were very soon put on a completely new basis by the "Law on the Order of National Labor," and state protection for workers was created by the "Law on Labor Trustees."

There it says in § 3:

"Pending the reorganization of the social constitution, the trustees, in place of the associations of employees, individual employers, or the association of employers, shall regulate for the persons concerned the

conditions concerning the conclusion of labor contracts... In all other respects, the trustees shall see to the maintenance of industrial peace. They are called upon to cooperate in a new labor constitution."

The trustees of labor were appointed essentially not as professional officials, but as personalities of proven social disposition and past.

In the following year, the "Law on the Order of National Labor" was created, and also the "Trustee Law". Incidentally, the implementation of German socialism, as I would like to call it, was entrusted by Adolf Hitler to Robert Ley, the Reich organization leader of the NSDAP, by commissioning him with the creation of the German Labor Front as a subsidiary organization of the NSDAP. "Works managers" and "workers" were to be members of the DAF in the same way.

Joachim C. Fest writes about Robert Ley in his book "The Face of the Third Reich":

"The appearance of Robert Ley, on the other hand, in its at the same time feeble, ascending and coarse, but altogether meager cut, suggested the renunciation of an additional contribution all the more, because the personal structures in this case largely coincide with those of some partners from Hitler's entourage."

The remark testifies to a complete ignorance of the reality of the Third Reich, and truly not only in this case. Robert Ley was one of the most important, independent personalities in the Third Reich; of great wealth of ideas, great motor, hard-to-brake assertiveness and a never flagging idealism and will to help the German worker in his entirety to a better life, as far as it was only somehow in his power. In this respect, he was the idea-bearer of "German socialism" par excellence.

With the authority of a party organization, the DAF was able to fight for wages for the workers that were at all possible in peacetime from an operational and macroeconomic point of view and within the framework of the desired price stability. In addition to the wage level itself, extensive fringe benefits of various kinds increasingly took on a special role over the years.

In the following, only a short overview shall be given by quoting from the series of the Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte No. 19 by Peter Hüttenherger "Die Gauleiter" - a carefully researched and objectively evaluating historical work in every respect:

"The takeover of union assets and the income from membership dues made the DAF an extraordinarily financially strong organization. As an "affiliated association" of the NSDAP, it had its own property rights, unlike the NSDAP's branches. The Reich treasurer of the NSDAP had only certain supervisory and auditing powers, but was not the administrator of the DAF's assets. With its (1938) membership of some 23 million, the DAF was numerically almost five times as strong as the NSDAP, and while many NSDAP Gau were still in debt in the early years of the Third Reich, the DAF was able to set up its own banks and po tent economic organizations and continually expand its influence. Ley, whom Gauleiter Wahl accused of "pathological organizational mania" and who had capable organizers like Selzner at his side, set up the Reichsheimstättenamt from January 1934 onward, which tackled more than 200,000 building projects by 1936. The DAF established numerous schools and workshops for vocational education and retraining, which,

according to Ley, employed 250,000 teachers and trained 2.5 million workers by 1936. It organized the Reich Vocational Competitions and published 88 trade and professional journals in its own publishing houses with a total circulation of 10 million copies, as well as a number of political propaganda magazines ('Arbeitertum,' 'Schönheit der Arbeit,' 'Der Aufbau'). It supervised and directed institutions for the promotion of public health, the giant undertaking 'Strength through Joy', built thousands of green spaces, hundreds of sports fields and swimming pools, maintained its own theaters, a Reich symphony orchestra, etc., and owned a public education institute and a public school. It had a public education center and a so-called "Workers' Thanks" for the care of Wehrmacht reservists. For the training of its own functionaries, the DAF operated 9 Reich schools and 40 district schools. It also financed the party schools in the 'Ordensburgen' Vogelsang, Sonthofen and Grössinsee, which were under the control of Ley in his own capacity as head of the Reich organization of the NSDAP. The latter were an example of how the DAF's resources and apparatus also benefited the Reich organization leader and strengthened his position."

Motor of Hitler's Foreign Policy: Fear of Bolshevism

I spent two years in Allied internment camps after the war, two years in the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg and two years in the penitentiary in Landsberg. At that time I had enough time to think about the past, the present and the future. With regard to the past, I was naturally and repeatedly occupied with the question: what was the motivation for Hitler's foreign policy? Since then, 40 years have passed and I have read much of what is historically relevant about the 6 years of peace and 6 years of war of the Third Reich. With regard to the motivation of Hitler's foreign policy, I have essentially remained with the conviction I had already formed in the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg:

The guiding star of Hitler's foreign policy, overshadowing everything else, was the fear of Bolshevism.

In August 1936, Hitler wrote a memorandum on the tasks of the Four-Year Plan. At that time, only three copies were available. Göring had been forbidden by Hitler to read from it or even to pass it on. It was therefore undoubtedly not intended for propaganda purposes. Nor was it intended to influence third parties. As far as I quote from it in the following, insinuations are taken from the original. The quotations are all taken from the first part of the memorandum, which bears the subheading:

The political situation

"Politics is the conduct and course of the historical life struggle of peoples. The goal of these struggles is the assertion of existence. Even the idealistic worldview struggles have their ultimate causes and receive their deepest impulses from nationally given life purposes and goals. Religions and world views, however, are always able to give such struggles a special hardness and therefore also lend them a great historical forcefulness. They leave their mark on the content of centuries. It is then not possible for peoples and states living in the sphere of such

ideological or religious conflicts to isolate or exclude themselves from the events.

Christianity and the migration of peoples determined the historical content of centuries. Mohammedism shook the Orient and at the same time the Occident also for the duration of half a millennium. The Reformation affected the whole of Central Europe. It was not possible for individual states - either through wisdom or deliberate indifference - to remain unaffected by the events. Since the outbreak of the French Revolution the world has been drifting at an ever sharper pace into a new conflict, the most extreme solution of which is called Bolshevism, but the content and aim of which is only the elimination and replacement of the hitherto leading social strata of mankind by the internationally spread Jewry. No state will be able to evade this historical confrontation or even to keep away from it.

Since Marxism, by its victory in Russia, has created for itself one of the largest empires of the world as a starting area for its further operations, this question has become a threatening one. A democratic world torn in itself ideologically is confronted with a united, authoritarian ideologically founded will to attack.

The military means of power of this will to attack increase in rapidity from year to year. One compares with the Red Army actually created today the assumptions of the military 10, 15 or 20 years ago, in order to get an idea of the then occurring conditions.

As always, Germany will have to be regarded as the focal point of the Western world in the face of the Bolshevik attacks. I do not regard this as a pleasant mission, but as an aggravation and burden on our national life, unfortunately caused by our unfortunate situation in Europe. However, we cannot escape this fate.

Our political situation results from the following:

Europe currently has only two states that can be considered steadfast in the face of Bolshevism: Germany and Italy. The other countries are either decomposed by their democratic way of life, infected by Marxism, and thus in the foreseeable future will themselves fall into collapse, or are ruled by authoritarian governments whose only strength is the military means of power, i.e., they are incapable, because of the necessity of securing the existence of their leadership to their own peoples by the brute force of the executive, of using this brute force for the preservation of the states to the outside. All these countries would be incapable of ever waging a promising war against Soviet Russia.

Just as, apart from Germany and Italy, only Japan can be regarded as a power facing the world danger. It is not the purpose of this memorandum to prophesy the time when the untenable situation in Europe will become an open crisis. I only wish to set down in these lines my conviction that this crisis cannot fail to materialize and will not fail to materialize, and that Germany has a duty to safeguard her own existence against this catastrophe by all means and to protect herself against it, and that a number of consequences arise from this compulsion which concern the most important tasks which have ever been set before our people.

For a victory of Bolshevism over Germany would not lead to a Versailles Treaty, but to a final annihilation, even extermination, of the German people.

The extent of such a catastrophe cannot be foreseen. Just as the densely populated West of Europe (including Germany) would experience after a Bolshevik collapse the most horrible catastrophe of nations, which has afflicted mankind since the extinction of the ancient states.

Compared with the necessity of the defense of this danger all other considerations have to step as completely irrelevant into the background!

...

The military evaluation is to be carried out by the new army. The extent and the tempo of the military evaluation of our forces cannot be chosen large and not fast enough!

It is a capital error to believe that any negotiation or balancing could take place over the points with other necessities of life. As much as the entire life picture of a nation should be a balanced one; in g know times unilateral shifts must be made to the disadvantage of other, not so much vital tasks. If it is not possible in the shortest possible time to develop the German Wehrmacht in training, in the tasks of the formations, in equipment, and above all in spiritual education into the first army of the world, Germany will be lost!"

² The same lines of thought were repeated by Hitler in an internal party speech, which I myself heard at the end of April 1937 at a "training conference" at the Ordensburg Sonthofen. I reported on this in my book "Crisis Managers in the Third Reich:

"By a purposeful but also ruthless policy of communism, Stalin had created in recent years from the peasantry of former Russia and from a people with a high rate of illiteracy an industrial nation of economic potency in no less than 15 years. On the basis of the high talent and diligence of the Russian people, the untapped strength and the strong increase in population, this process will accelerate and in another decade

at the latest it will give rise to an economic and military power which Europe will have nothing equal to.

This is a profoundly tragic situation for us, but it is unavoidable. The Reich, Hitler said, is now geographically Europe's barrier against the East. The task of warding off an overflow of a political, military and national nature has been imposed on us by fate, and we cannot avoid the task.' He had therefore prepared all steps in the Four-Year Plan to provide us with the means of successfully resisting this threat by building up armaments and a strong, effective Wehrmacht. For him it was certain that time was not working for us, but for the East."

3 The partial mobilization of the Czechoslovak forces on May 20, 1938, and the expectation of the high electoral victory of Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten Germans, on May 22, 1938, decided the fate of Czechoslovakia. Hitler realized abruptly that without the elimination of the Czechoslovak armed forces and airfields where the Soviet Union had general permission to land, the Soviet Union could put us in a militarily hopeless position at any time. In connection with this, the words "Czechoslovakia as a mothership in the open body of the Reich" were used. The dramatic May days 1938 are described by Gauleiter Jordan as a witness of these days (Hitler was with him in Dessau) in his book 'Im Zeugenstand der Geschichte'.

The German-Soviet non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939, and the secret agreement concluded at the same time on the division of East-Central Europe into spheres of interest sealed Poland's fate on the basis of the British will to war, which remained unimpressed. Never again would it be possible to push the eastern border of the German Reich so far eastward with the consent of the Soviet Union.

5 Hitler's discussions with Molotov, the Soviet Union's Foreign Minister, on November 12 and 13, 1940, finally settled the question of whether it might be possible to divert the Soviet Union's expansionist drive into Asia. Molotov insisted that Romania, Bulgaria, and the Dardanelles must clearly be part of Soviet Russia's sphere of interest. When Molotov had left Berlin, Hitler ordered the preparation of Aktion "Barbarossa".

While the leadership of the Wehrmacht components had raised the most serious concerns about the aggression against Denmark and Norway and the Western campaign, such concerns were hardly raised about a Russian campaign. It was believed that once again a blitzkrieg could be successfully carried out. Then, however, it became apparent that this had been based on false premises. Despite the high praise that was given to the German military attaché in Moscow and part of the intelligence service "Foreign Armies East" under Gehlen at that time and still is given by some people today, it became clear that armament-wise, militarily and politically completely wrong assumptions had been made.

Hitler's fear of Bolshevism proved to be fully justified.

Albert Speer's "Findings"

Albert Spear
Written, sworn statement dated June 15, 1977

"I, Albert Speer, know the meaning of an affidavit and hereby declare under oath as follows:

Today living in Heidelberg, Schloß-Wolfsbrunnenweg 50, I graduated as an architect from the Technical University of Berlin-Charlottenburg with the academic degree of Diplom-Ingenieur. I became Hitler's architect after 1933, and from 1942 the minister responsible for armaments in Hitler's government. Sentenced to twenty years imprisonment in the trial of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, I was released on October 1, 1966. After that I wrote two books "Erinnerungen" and "Spandauer Tagebücher".

Hatred of the Jews was Hitler's motor and central point, perhaps even the actual element that moved him. The German people, the German greatness, the Reich, all this meant nothing to him in the end. Therefore, also the final sentence of his will wanted to commit us Germans after the apocalyptic downfall to a miserable hatred of the Jews.

I was present at the Reichstag session of January 30, 1939, when Hitler asserted that in the event of war not the Germans but the Jews would be destroyed. This sentence was said with such certainty that I should not have doubted the intention to carry it out. He repeated this announcement of his intentions on January 30, 1942, in a speech with which I was also acquainted: the war would not end, as the Jews imagine, by the extermination of the European-Aryan peoples, but the result of the war would be the extermination of the Jews. This repetition of his words of January 30, 1939 was not unique. He often used to remind those around him of the meaning of this sentence.

When he spoke about the victims of the bombings, especially after the heavy attacks on Hamburg in the summer of 1943, he repeated time and again that he was avenging these victims against the Jews, as if the air terror against the Zivil population was just what he needed and provided him with a late substitute motive for a crime that had been decided long ago and originated from completely different layers of his personality. Completely, as if he wanted to justify the own mass murder with these remarks.

In the case of temperamental outbursts of hatred, it was easier to hope for a change to more moderate paths with Hitler.

It was therefore the firmness and coldness that made his outbursts of hatred against the Jews so credible. If in other areas he announced horrible resolutions in a cold and quiet voice, those around him knew for sure that it had now become serious. And it was precisely with this cold superiority that he stated, even at the common lunch table, that he wanted to destroy the Jews in Europe.

The Gauleiter of Lower Silesia, Karl Hanke, visited me in the summer of 1944. Hanke had distinguished himself by his bravery in the Polish and French campaigns. He was certainly not a man who was easily terrorized. Therefore it had special weight when he told me at that time, shocked, that monstrous things were happening in a concentration camp in his neighboring region of Upper Silesia. He had been there, and he could never forget the terrible things he had seen there. He did not mention any names, but it must have been Auschwitz, located in Upper Silesia. From the agitation of this battle-hardened soldier I could gather that something unheard of was happening, if it stunned even this old party leader of Hitler.

It was part of Hitler's way of working that he also passed on important orders to his confidants orally. Also in the Fuehrer's minutes of my discussions with Hitler, which are contained without gaps in the German Federal Archives, there are numerous orders also in important areas which Hitler obviously gave me only orally. It is therefore in accordance with Hitler's working methods and must not be regarded as a gap that there is no written order for the extermination of the Jews.

The murder of the Jews in the extermination camps was brought forward in court (I. M. T.) by witnesses and by documents and was not seriously denied by any of the defendants. Himmler's speech to the SS leaders on October 4, 1943, in which he made clear what was happening in the death camps, was not discredited by the defense as a forgery, as happened, for example, with the Hossbach Protocol.

Frank never disputed the authenticity of his diary, which he said he handed over to the Americans when he was arrested. It contains remarks proving that the Jews in Poland, except for a remnant of 100,000, had been exterminated. These remarks of Frank's were also taken seriously by the defendants; criticism was limited to the stupidity of having left this discriminatory diary to the "opponents".

Schirach confirmed in a confidential conversation, already during the trial, that he had been present at a speech by Himmler to the Gauleiters in Posen (on October 6, 1943), in which Himmler clearly and unequivocally announced the killing of the Jews as a program that had been carried out for the most part. He came back to this event, which burdened him mentally, also during his time in prison in Spandau.

In his closing speech, Goering spoke of the grave crimes that had come to light during the trial, in which he condemned the terrible mass murders for which he lacked all understanding. In his closing speech, Streicher condemned Hitler's mass killings of the Jews. For Fritzsche, also in his closing words, the murder of 5 million was a gruesome warning for the future. The words of these defendants support my statement that during

the Nuremberg trial the defendants and the defense lawyers acknowledged the mass murders of the Jews as having taken place.

The Nuremberg Trial still means to me today an attempt to advance towards a better world. I still recognize the reasons given by the International Military Tribunal for my sentence as generally correct. However, I still consider it right today to accept responsibility and thus the guilt for everything that was committed after I joined the Hitler government on February 8, 1942, in terms of crimes in a general sense. It is not the individual mistakes that burden me, however great they may be, but my actions in leadership. For this reason, I admitted overall responsibility for my person at the Nuremberg Trial and continue to do so today. I still see my main guilt in the approval of the persecutions of the Jews and the murder of millions of them.

counted. Albert Speer"

A due response

The "small party comrade", primarily those who had already joined the NSDAP in the Weimar Republic, was criminalized by the victor in 1945 for having joined a "criminal organization". And this accusation refers to a time when really nobody could see what the years 1933 to 1945 would bring. The overwhelming majority of the German people - i.e. also the non-partisans - but also the governments and peoples of the world, who had provided Hitler with a domestic and foreign political basis, recognition and upgrading, obviously did not know that "Hitler's motor and central point had been hatred of the Jews "and that "the German people, German greatness, the Reich ultimately meant nothing to him" and that "the air terror against the civilian population would be just right for him and would provide him with a late substitute motive for a long decided crime".

If the whole world did not know this, with the exception of the man Albert Speer, who voluntarily and committedly entered Adolf Hitler's ministerial ranks, even the decisive position of the man responsible for the armament of war, and there in the short time of his central activity made possible for Hitler what seemed impossible, then the character of such a man must be atrocious!

Since when has Albert Speer wanted to know this? Since January 30, 1939, when Hitler declared that if the international Jewry should succeed in entangling the European peoples in a new world war, this would not result in the annihilation of the Aryan race, but of the Jewish race. Hitler had used the form of possibility, that is, if others than he should force a war, that developments would then occur of which the warmongers should be aware. The Jews could not consider themselves unaffected in such a case. Undoubtedly, such a statement by Hitler could also be taken as a threat and certainly should be, but in politics of all times any means of deterrence, especially verbal deterrents, have been considered legitimate and still are today. Not only Albert Speer heard this Reichstag speech, but the world heard it, sound recordings are historically recorded. Also Albert Speer had not drawn those conclusions from these sentences at that time, as he did after the Second World War. It is strange that Albert Speer does not speak at all about the actions of the others, which forced Hitler to react! For he would also have to consider whether such a statement of Hitler's "came just in time" to force him further and further into international conflicts in the expectation that after a victory over Hitler one could refer to his will to exterminate the Jews and keep quiet about all other connections. If Hitler came back to this point several times in the course of the war, it was a consequence of the fact that World Zionism, organized in the World Jewish Congress, had declared war on Germany, and was therefore an enemy of war, and that this enemy of war fought on all fronts, even against women and children, regardless of any rules of war, - with

the aim of destroying Germany. He was even after the outbreak of the war a driving force to let any 'peace initiatives of Hitler fail! Regrettably, Albert Speer did not remember this in 1977.

Which crime weighs more heavily, a crime in the course of a war of extermination or a policy "which must lead to the slaughter of millions of human beings," as even the British wartime prime minister Winston Churchill, in his postwar memoirs, attributed to the British guarantee to Poland of March 31, 1939 alone? ("The Second World War" 1st Book, Vol . 1 "The Storm is Rising" p. 421/423)

On the other hand, Albert Speer admits that "when Hitler announced horrible decisions in a low voice", he and those around him "knew that it had now become serious". So he knew about "gruesome resolutions" and "that it was serious." Nevertheless, he mobilized the armament further, instead of killing the leader, who was recognized by him as a "criminal", and his obviously also "criminal surroundings"! Why did he not do this even in beginnings?

However, he unfortunately did not mention anything concrete about the "horrible resolutions" (plural) quoted by him, which were also heard by many people. A war of extermination led by all opponents "with all horrible means" relativizes namely many things. It must be repeated: Unfortunately, Albert Speer did not know anything disadvantageous about Germany's enemies in 1977. All this makes his statement so unrealistic and unbelievable.

Because that there was only one criminal with his accomplices and otherwise only "peace friends" and humanists, Albert Speer can't want to make an enlightened mankind believe that!

Even the Gauleiter of Lower Silesia, Karl Hanke, mentioned by him, had apparently reported nothing concrete to him, when Speer's position as Minister of Armaments was such that he could have demanded clarification if he wanted to!

That Hitler also gave orders orally is certainly not to be denied, but the evidence Albert Speer cites for this is that such orders were obviously recorded in the "Führer Protocols", all of which are still preserved in the Federal Archives in Koblenz. The fact is, however, that the allegedly verbally issued extermination order(s) against the Jews is/are not available in any "Führer protocols" or other protocols.

The fact that defendants in the IMT trial "did not seriously" deny exterminations claimed by "witnesses and documents presented" is in the nature of things. On the one hand, the völkisch extermination struggle in the East naturally brought chaotic excesses also on the German side, which could not be disputed by any of the defendants, and on the other hand, none of the defendants in the IMT trial was a concrete connoisseur or witness of a crime, in order to be able to concretely dispute allegations of others. Göring, Streicher, Fritzsche condemned the terrible mass murders "which had become known during the trial". Here one would have to start, whether the information conveyed in the IMT-trial was really true or not. The fact that in that trial witnesses were threatened with death, untrue allegations were made, documents were falsified, and many other ways of bending the law were used, is by now all too well known for a historian to take the "facts that became known in the trial" at face value without checking them. In addition, there would be the reservation to evaluate statements of the defendants in that trial from the point of view of their defense. To pass off such behavior as a kind of proof of systematic exterminations having taken place is unobjective.

Concerning the diary of Hans Frank it has to be said that it consists of 42 volumes (about 12,000 pages). Hans Frank did not check and confirm the stenographic transcripts and other recorded details in each case. Besides, there is a big difference between what has been said and what has been carried out. It is not disputed that Frank admitted to great injustice, horrible excesses in the Polish (partisan) war zone, which it was not in his power to thwart. However, the diary of Hans Frank also reveals that his mission throughout the war was to enable economic reconstruction and cooperation with Germany in the Generalgouvernement, which was possible within the framework

of the war. It also further reveals that Germany's adversaries, with their extermination aims and methods, attempted to thwart such a task from the outset and ultimately thwarted it altogether, provoking terrifying reactions. War creates unpredictable motivations and horrifying conditions! To represent such after end of the war only on the one side as having been present does not do justice to the historical facts. If finally still causes and effects are interchanged with each other, then the total representation is worthless.

Himmler's infamous speech of October 6, 1943, remains controversial, its alleged audio recording implausible. If there was a central secret plan for the extermination of Jews, Himmler would not have been allowed to reveal it to a large body of political leaders throughout the Reich, nor could he have done so without being held responsible himself. If it should be true, however, that Himmler announced the extermination of the Jews "as a largely implemented program" on Oct. 6, 1943, then the only period in which this could have been carried out with all its technical preparations would be the time between autumn 1942 and 1943, i.e. one year. But what was possible for the German side in terms of technology, raw materials, etc. in one year under the toughest war conditions? And finally: Where are the finds? Until today they do not exist! The historian demands these and other indications, - Albert Speer did not deliver them! (Cf. on document falsifications and "finds" from the journal series "Historical Facts" No. 2 and No. 5).

Without wanting to deny what horrible things happened on all sides in the course of the war, much of what the victorious powers blame on the German side after the war they won remains extraordinarily strange, contradictory and, in any case, so far unsubstantiated if one were to apply the rigor of circumstantial and factual evidence that is applied in normal criminal proceedings.

This may be briefly explained by the example of the always quoted "Ereignismeldungen UdSSR" (Bundesarchiv Koblenz - R 58/221). These event reports were compiled on the basis of teletype reports of the Einsatzgruppen and -commandos and were sent in April 1942 (last report) in 75 copies. They contain very detailed information, also constantly announce the severity of the partisan operations and contain only for the year 1941 numbers of mass liquidations, i.e. at a time when a so-called "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" was not even under discussion. It remains strange that those who wrote down those figures in Berlin on the basis of telexes (which are no longer available),

- a) published against all considerations and orders of secrecy, without ever being held accountable,
- b) published to recipients whom they must have known would be deeply shocked by such information,
- c) after the end of the war the Soviets never presented the findings to the world public in a conclusive way.

Just the missing proof after the end of the war, since the victorious Soviet power had decades of time to search and to find (the positions of the tank trenches laid out before the beginning of the war knew it besides!), will have to be evaluated by the history research as unmistakable proof for the fact that the relevant sides of the papers submitted after the war from the Reich Security Main Office remain questionable.

The autobiography of Leopold Trepper, the head of the "Red Orchestra," the largest communist spy organization during World War II, is probably the most exemplary way to ask about the reasons for the hatred that drove those people to go on the rampage against National Socialist Germany. Leopold Trepper, using 440 pages for his memoirs, did not justify this with a single sentence, but he demonstrated as a matter of course that this hatred - generally acknowledged - was justified. Let us quote him himself in his book "Die Wahrheit" (Kindler Verlag, Munich 1975):

"From the pogroms in tsarist Russia to the Dreyfus Affair, I had studied the manifestations of anti-Semitism, its origins and mechanisms, and Nazism seemed to me to be its worst manifestation in the twentieth century. The faster the unclean beast grew up, the more I was troubled by the carelessness of the world"

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor - the world read it on the front pages of its daily newspapers. For me as a communist, this event acted as an alarm signal. The door to barbarism had been pushed open (S. 73)

The world had failed to nip the brown plague in the bud, the disease was rampant, the danger of infection was increasing. When I went to France in connection with my first mission on May 1, 1937, and stopped in Berlin, I could not believe my eyes! Unbearable the sight, which offered itself to me on the streets: Thousands of workers with umbrella cap, thousands of Jugendliehen marched hinter the flags and locations of the Nazis and sang loudly the Hitlerischen hymns. I stood spellbound at the roadside, unable to comprehend what I was seeing. What mass madness had befallen the Germans? At that moment, under the impression of the blaring chants that all Europe would soon hear, I became convinced that Nazism could only lead to a catastrophe, to a world conflagration, and I decided to take my place in this relentless struggle in which the future of humanity was at stake. In the front line ... "(p. 74)

What would Mr. Trepper say if a German were to stand at the roadside in Jerusalem and judge the Israeli state in the same way? Would he not have done better to take care of his own concerns than to intervene in the internal affairs of a foreign people? Where did he get the right to fight the democratic execution of the will of the German people?

But for whom did Leopold Trepper stand up, for whom did he work and fight in the front line? He writes about this "Soviet paradise" himself:

"Of course, if the road was littered with workers' corpses, then it would not, could not lead to socialism. Our comrades disappeared, the best of us perished in the cellars of the NKVD, the Stalinist regime distorted socialism beyond recognition. Ten times, a hundred times more communists than Hitler were liquidated by Stalin, the great gravedigger

... as a stateless Polish Jew who had lived in Palestine and worked in Moscow on a Jewish daily newspaper, I was ten times a suspect for the NKVD

'You still have about two years until the outbreak of war' he (Soviet General Bersin, later also liquidated by Stalin) said. Rely first and foremost on yourself. Your task is solely the fight against the Third Reich, nothing else. Until the war begins, your secret organization must remain

in a position of rest ' (p. 90 - the conversation took place in the fall of 1937).

Why had they spared me ? (meant were Stalin's people in Moscow)

Then came the show trials. The most improbable charges were brought against deserving Bolsheviks, loyal comrades-in-arms of Lenin, and they were labeled English, French, Polish spies - nationality did not matter! Evidence was cobbled together in a makeshift manner. In every trial, names of Politburo members were listed who had allegedly escaped an assassination attempt by the accused by a hair's breadth. The list changed. Sometimes, in the next trial, there were people in the dock who, only a few months ago, were themselves 'threatened' by a plot - now branded as terrorists. This sad spectacle, crudely staged so that even the most blind eyes should have been able to see, was intended to terrify Soviet citizens. An unimaginable mass psychosis, fomented by the entire state apparatus, gripped the country. Immoderateness and mischief everywhere (S. 56)

It would be ... to speak of the physical and mental tortures and the systematic blackmail of the accused by threats of reprisals against their families. Nor should the unjust fate of a limited number of trial victims tempt us to overlook the oppression of millions of Soviet citizens for whom confessions were not needed.

Stalinism failed all along the line, economic development, forced collectivization, industrialization. Only the cadre extermination plan was fulfilled with excess. The 'rotation of cadres' decreed by Stalin provided for the liquidation of everyone who held an office. With scientific meticulousness the purge was carried out, category by category, quarter by quarter, ministry by ministry, subject by subject. Each victim dragged his colleagues, friends and acquaintances down with him (S. 57-58)

At that time there lived in the Soviet capital several thousand foreign Communists active in the Comintern, the Profilers, the Peasants' International, the Youth International and the Women's Organization: Ninety percent of them were liquidated! As if that were not enough, thousands of political refugees from all over the world found again in the Soviet Union the very torture chambers and execution squads from which they had fled in their home countries (S. 59)

After the XXth Party Congress in 1956, everyone acted as if they were blindsided; Khrushchev's speech supposedly revealed an unprecedented event. In reality, they had been accomplices in the liquidations, even in cases where they were their own party friends!

I have memories of those dark times that I will never get rid of (S. 61)

The fear of tomorrow, the fear of perhaps living the last hours in freedom, determined all our actions, became second nature to us, made us cautious and submissive. I knew that my friends were under arrest and kept silent. Why them? Why not me? Constantly expecting my own turn, I prepared myself inwardly for this aftermath (S. 62)

Particles of the Appartes ourselves and driven almost to madness by the terror, we created the instruments of our own subjugation. All those who did not rebel against the Stalinist death machinery are guilty, a collective guilt. I do not exclude myself from this judgment.

Who then protested? Who then stood up and shouted out their disgust?" (S. 63)

Adolf Hitler, for example! Mr. Trepper!

Let's break off here. Can people like Leopold Trepper give us Germans advice, preach morals to us, be role models, can such people convince us that "they were on the better side?" Can we understand them at all in their political commitment, in their hatred of Germany? Can reason and logic still have any access here at all? - - The answer is left to the reader.

End of the original article